Explorations in the psychosocial dimensions of gender, social class and education

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EXPLORATIONS IN THE PSYCHOSOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF GENDER, SOCIAL CLASS AND EDUCATION

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Abstract

This thesis explores the interplay of gender, social class and education in the constitution of contemporary feminine identities. It is based on a longitudinal, qualitative study of working-class and middle-class girls growing up entitled *Project 4:21 Transitions to Womanhood*. Drawing on Foucauldian and feminist post-structuralism, Kleinian and the object relations schools of psychoanalysis, a psychosocial perspective is developed through which to investigate the ways in which individual, family and social processes are mutually constituted psychically and socially. A psychosocial methodology is developed and employed to extend researcher reflexivity and allow for the analysis of unconscious processes in research encounters. Data across all phases of the study are analysed, to a) explore the regulation of femininity in post-industrial, late twentieth century Britain and b) investigate the reasons for the enduring importance of social class in the production of educational success and failure. Several interconnected arguments are put forward: that women are regulated through discourses of mothering and the education of young children, and through these discourses middle-class child-rearing practices that emphasise rationality are understood as 'normal' whilst working-class practices that make unequal relations of power and authority explicit are pathologised; that working-class children do not achieve high educational achievement by adopting the same practices as those of the middle-classes; that middle-class girls' educational lives are circumscribed by expectations of academic success, with anxiety about failure being key to the formation of contemporary professional middle-class identities; and that educational success and social mobility for working-class girls is a doubled-edged process characterised by ambivalence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis owes most to the families who took part in all of the phases of *Project 4:21 Transitions to Womanhood*. I am very grateful to them for their generosity and openness. So many people have contributed to the development of this thesis in terms of intellectual stimulation that I haven't got room to mention them all here – most are named in the text. But there are some that deserve a special thanks: Diane Reay, who inspired me to develop my own academic identity and who was such fun to work with; Meg Maguire, whose critical appreciation of my ideas encouraged and extended me so much; and Sharon Gewirtz, who forced me to explain myself whenever I wandered off into 'psychobabble'. I would also like to thank my colleagues on *Project 4:21*, June Melody and Valerie Walkerdine who I started all this off with.

Throughout the writing of this thesis my family and friends have continued to be the funniest, kindest and most supportive people I've ever known. Mum, Margaret, Maura, Christopher, Peter and Sean, Hester, Gill, Pippa and Gina (who proof-read the final draft) - thanks for patiently putting up with my absence, for understanding how much work it has taken and for being so enthusiastic about the idea of me being a 'doctor'. Rich, thank you for everything you give for which there are no words.

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PREFACE

This thesis builds upon a number of publications mainly arising from a longitudinal study of girls growing up entitled *Project 4:21 Transitions to Womanhood*. This was a collaborative endeavour and my thesis has benefited from this. Most of the publications arising from that research were in the name of all research team members.

In any collaborative research and writing, especially in the case of books, intellectual ownership of the ideas and arguments is not so clear-cut as it is in sole authored pieces. Therefore, in relation to publications arising from *Project 4:21*, I have only included those of which I claim full authorship and ownership of the work contained therein, even though the publication may bear the name of co-researchers. Additionally, these are pieces that I have sought to critically extend in this thesis, by refining and reworking their central ideas.

All of the co-authors of the publications referred to in this thesis have recognised the legitimacy of this claim and have given their explicit permission for material from the publications to be included.

The key publications drawn upon in this thesis are:

Lucey, H. (2004) 'Differentiated Citizenship: psychic defence, social division and the construction of local secondary school markets', in G. Lewis (ed) *Citizenship*, Bristol, Policy Press in association with the Open University.

Lucey, H. (2001) 'Social Class, Gender and Schooling' in B. Francis and C. Skelton (eds) *New Perspectives in Gender and Education*, Milton Keynes, Open University Press.

Lucey H. (with Walkerdine V.) (1999) 'Boys' Under-achievement: Social Class and Changing Masculinities' in T. Cox (Ed) *Combating Educational Disadvantage*, pp.37-52, London, Falmer Press.

Lucey, H. (with Melody, J. and Walkerdine, V.) (2003a) 'Developing a psychosocial perspective in one longitudinal study', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, Vol. 6, No. 3, pp 279-284.

Lucey, H. (with Melody, J. and Walkerdine, V.) (2003a) 'Uneasy hybrids: psychosocial aspects of becoming educationally successful for working class young women', Special Issue: Diverse Working Class Femininities in Education. *Gender and Education*, Vol. 3, No. 15.

Lucey, H. (with Walkerdine, V., and Melody, J.) (2001) *Growing Up Girl: psychosocial explorations of gender and class*, Hampshire, Palgrave.

Lucey, H. (with Walkerdine, V.) (1989) *Democracy in the Kitchen*, London, Virago.

Chapter One, where I discuss the psychoanalytic concepts that form part of the theoretical framework for the thesis, I have reproduced and reworked sections from Lucey (2004). Chapter Two refers to Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) in describing the empirical study on which the thesis is based. In the latter part of the chapter, which details a psychosocial approach to methodology, I have extended ideas from Walkerdine and Lucey (1989), and drawn on material from Chapter Four of Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody (2001), the article Lucey, Walkerdine and Melody (2003a) and Lucey (2004). Chapter Three summarises the key arguments made in Walkerdine and Lucey (1989). Chapter Four draws upon material in Walkerdine and Lucey (1989), Lucey and Walkerdine (1999) and Lucey (2001) before moving on to data analysis and arguments drawn from Chapter Five of Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody (2001). Chapter Five is a reworked and updated version of the article, Lucey, Walkerdine and Melody (2003b). Chapters Six, Seven and Eight draw primarily upon chapters Seven, Two and Three respectively of Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody (2001).

PART I

INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I develop a psychosocial theoretical and epistemological perspective in order to explore the interplay of gender, social class and education in the constitution of contemporary feminine identities. I do this through the analysis of empirical data collected as part of the qualitative study *Project 4:21 Transitions to Womanhood*[1]. This longitudinal piece of research focused on two groups of girls who were born in England in the mid and late 1970s and who were studied at home and at school. The girls were followed up in the mid 1990s when they were young women of sixteen and twenty-one years old respectively. A full description of the study and its methodology is given in Chapter Two. In the following sections I historically contextualise the study, elaborate on the aims of the thesis, give a rationale for the thesis and indicate how it relates to existing academic work in various fields.

Historical and social context of the thesis

Throughout the three decades in which the girls who took part in *Project 4:21* grew up, a tide of such change swept across the economic, social, political and personal landscapes of Britain[2], that the world they entered as young women in 1994, when they took part in the last phase of the study, was, in crucial ways, vastly different to the one they were born into. During this time, many of the certainties of everyday life in the UK, recognisable to their parents, had been eroded or washed away. Manufacturing industries were supplanted by financial industries, which, along with the communications and service sectors became the mainstay of the British economy. Traditional conceptions of class had broken up in the face of an historical blend of global recession, mass unemployment, including the collapse of the youth labour market, the dissolution of traditional manual industries and with

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[1] The study will be referred to as *Project 4:21* throughout the rest of the thesis.
[2] These were developments that were also evident in Western Europe and North America.

them their communities, and the introduction of new technologies. All of these shifts were created and/or supported by successive Conservative governments of the 1980s and 1990s who were determined to overhaul economic and political life in order to compete effectively within the global economy. In her drive for individualism over collectivism, the Tory prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, pushed through anti-union legislation, the privatisation of public services, the erosion of welfare entitlements, and the promotion of meritocratic philosophies in education and at work. An epitaph for the 1980s is Thatcher's now famous declaration that 'there is no such thing as society'[3].

Traditional male working-class occupations dried up, and many working-class men struggled to find new forms of work, as well as adapting (or not) to increases in the number of women in paid employment and their rising economic power. Women's position meanwhile, at home and in the labour force, was full of possibilities, constraints and contradictions. For many women, whatever their class location, areas of the labour market formerly denied them began to open up, though of course, many women were still employed in low-paid, part-time work. Additionally, even though more and more women were joining various professions and the new technologically driven service industries, these opportunities also brought the double burden of work and family.

These are all themes that were portrayed in a number of British cultural products of the 1990s. The films *The Full Monty* (1997) and *Brassed Off* (1996) and the BBC television drama series *The Missing Postman* (1997) captured the mood of deconstruction and change brought about by the erosion of the UK manufacturing base since the 1980s and the transformation of the industrial core of the country from a heartland to a wasteland. These cultural representations of that period highlight how transformations of the economic landscape deeply affected the personal lives of men and women who were required to re-invent themselves as a different kind of worker in this altered economy. Importantly, they all portray

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[3] Women's Own magazine, October 3, 1987.

working-class women as rising to the challenges of self-transformation more effectively than working-class men.

In 1994, at Phase Four of *Project 4:21* when the young women who took part in the study were sixteen and twenty-one years old, what was to be the seventeen year reign of Conservative government was in its death throes. Three years later, in May 1997, a bright, new, Labour dawn would break, and under the leadership of Tony Blair, the country was promised a government that would pander neither to the 'old' left nor the Conservative right, but would forge a 'Third Way'.[4] However, 'new' Labour carried over some distinctly 'old' Tory ideas, particularly about the kinds of psychological characteristics that modern, millennial 'citizens' should display and embody. In the late 1980s, under the auspices of the Conservative government, there had been a decisive shift from the idea of citizens as passive recipients of welfare towards a far more 'active' notion of citizenship that emphasised competitive self-interest, individual rights and personal responsibilities and obligations (Edwards and Glover 2001). This view was heavily influenced by rational choice theory, originating in the economics of consumption and constructed around the idea that people rationally calculate the likely costs and benefits of any action before deciding what to do (Browning et al 2000). These ideals of citizenship are ones that have been embraced by the Labour government of the late 1990s and fully incorporated into the 'Third Way'. Through a commitment to market principles in public service provision, Labour have further developed the idea of the 'citizen-consumer', a concept that was enshrined in Conservative policy documents such as *The Parent's Charter* (DES 1991) and *The Citizen's Charter* (1991). These represent citizenship both as a status and as a form of rights to information and to choice. Here, the citizen is conceptualised as an autonomous, self-conscious chooser who has real power as an active consumer (as opposed to a passive recipient) of services.

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[4] The 'third way' is a rather ill defined set of political positions. See Powell (1999) who describes it as 'something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue', for a full discussion.

This model of the citizen emerged alongside other ideas about how rapid local, national and global changes had impacted on the social world to produce a 'risk society' (Beck 1992). In contrast to an earlier, idealised world, characterised by certainty, there were now seen to exist unavoidable risks beyond government control and for which the new citizen-consumer must take individual responsibility. As David Miliband MP, Minister of State for School Standards, said in 2002: 'When creativity is at the heart of the learning process it contributes to the soft skills that are central to active citizenship: group work, communication, improvisation, problem-solving and the management of risk and uncertainty' (Miliband 2002). The active citizens summoned up in this quotation are charged with the responsibility of managing their own welfare through a process of continuous assessment that enables them to make choices about how best and from what source to meet their welfare needs. This entails a new balance between individual and collective rights and between rights and responsibilities.

Aims of the thesis

To be the new kind of citizen that modern, liberal forms of democratic government requires, means that one has to think in certain ways (Rose 1991). Such a shift demands a psychological subject who is capable of understanding themselves as an autonomous agent, a stand-alone person, aware of and responsible for their own thoughts and actions. This subject is rational and powerfully agentic: the producer of their present and their future, an inventor of the person they may be or become (Giddens1991).

This thesis addresses the making and re-making of girls and women as the modern neo-liberal subject; a subject of self-invention and transformation who is capable of surviving within this new sociality and economic and political system. It asks, what are the technologies of educational, cultural, family and individual regulation within and through which the young women and their families, who took part in this research, are produced? How do they live out what Rose (1989) calls

the 'fiction of autonomous selfhood', in the face of processes and structures that have the power to affect their personal lives, but which lie far beyond their personal control, such as those relating to gender, social class, disability, 'race', ethnicity and religion? For as this thesis demonstrates, it was class which insisted upon its presence in this study, even in the midst of the remaking of class. And it was social class, more than any other factor, which massively divided the girls and young women in terms of their educational attainment and their life pathways (see Chapter Four).

These young women were making their transitions into womanhood during a period of profound transition and transformation in Britain. In this thesis I want to convey how, just as moving into and taking on adult femininity can be a process fraught with losses and difficulty as well as gains and pleasure, so the period in which they grew up was one of loss and uncertainty as well as hope and excitement. The young women from professional families have had to cope with the loss of security that the new economy brings and therefore the uncertainty about the reproduction of the middle-class. The majority of the young women from working-class families have had to struggle educationally and then face a divided labour market which delivers few rewards (see Chapter Eight). At the same time, they are required to become perfect new workers, who can develop emotional as well as practical skills.

Dominant discourses of social class and gender at the turn of the twentieth century declared that class was dead and girls and women now had everything. However, there are, in Foucault's terms, silences in these discourses that leave gaping absences in our understanding of how classed and gendered subjects have been constituted. It is those absences which this thesis interrogates in order to understand what has not been able to be articulated. For example, although the working classes have been the objects of much sociological study, particularly in education, there is relatively little work that examines how working-class people manage their daily lives, how they cope, the practices through which their

subjectivity is produced[5]. In addition to this, in much social science research, middle-class subjects are taken to be the norm and so there is little serious analysis of the production of middle-class subjectivity. This thesis seeks to address this with respect to the lives of the young women I researched (see Chapters Four and Six).

What place then, do the old and the new apparatuses of 'class'-ification have in the making of the young woman as subject in 'turn of the century' Britain? In attempting to understand and address these questions, I understand social class as a category that is both phantasmatic and powerfully material (Butler 1990, 1997). That is, as operating psychically, through desires, phantasies[6], fears and fictions, and as a category that has considerable explanatory power as a way of understanding social, cultural and material differences between the young women discussed in this thesis. This means that the intersection of the social, cultural and psychic in understanding subjectivity is vital to my endeavour. It is for this reason that I have used the term 'psychosocial' in the title of this thesis. In particular, I will explore the place of unconscious as well as conscious processes in the making of the personal and the social. In that, I am joining a growing number of researchers and writers across the social sciences (Craib 1989; Pile 1996; Hollway and Jefferson 2000; Froggett 2002; Hoggett 2003; Clarke 2004). The psychosocial approach that I have developed and applied throughout this thesis is one way of pushing beyond accounts of the social world that prioritise conscious, rational explanations in order to appreciate the significance of and connections between unconscious and irrational dimensions of individuals and society (see Chapter Two).

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[5] Some excellent exceptions are Skeggs (1997), Kuhn (1995), Steedman (1986).
[6] Kleinian and British object relations psychoanalytic theorists used this spelling to distinguish between conscious 'fantasies', such as daydreams, of which we are aware, and unconscious 'phantasies' which, although we are not aware, exert considerable influence in our internal and external lives. In this thesis I use both spellings, but in accordance with this distinction in meaning. See Chapter One for a full explanation of phantasy/fantasy.

Taking a Foucauldian perspective, I maintain that social groups are produced and reproduced through strategies of regulation, forms of government and power which shape the day-to-day practices of ordinary people. In this approach subjects do not pre-exist the discursive practices through which what it means to be a subject are constituted. However, those practices are crosscut by relations of phantasy and by unconscious and conscious defences produced by family and cultural practices to guard against the fear that they might not survive, cope or manage to get by (Pheterson 1993; Walkerdine 1998). What I aim to do in this thesis therefore, is to set out the practices through which the middle-class and working-class girls are produced in relation to educational success and failure.

While I do discuss recent sociological work on class in Chapter Seven, the work I am proposing attempts to utilise insights from post-structuralism (for example, Rose 1999; Henriques et al 1998) and Kleinian and object relations psychoanalysis, to go beyond structure in my analysis of social class. In particular, I want to address the ways in which the practices of self-invention for these young women work in a way that is at once, psychological, social and cultural. Just as Cohen and Ainley argue that 'youth research has to find a way forward beyond economism and culturalism, to create a third space between a narrow empirical focus on transitions and a quasi-anthropological concern with exotic instances of youthful deviance and difference' (2000: 89), so work on class and gender has to find that third space. It is towards that new kind of work that this thesis gestures. I argue that an understanding of how young women and their families live subjectivity is crucial for understanding how class and gender operate in the present. While the sociological Foucauldianism of Rose and others is highly important for this work, it is not enough by itself. The social, cultural and psychological are so deeply entwined with each other that a disciplinary teasing apart does violence to the actual mechanisms (Walkerdine et al 2001). It is the deep embeddedness of the production of subjectivity in the social, cultural and psychic that I am exploring here. I shall explore this in detail by means of a number of case studies in the chapters that follow.

Outline of chapters

The thesis is divided into three sections. Part I is concerned with the theoretical and methodological basis for the thesis; in Part II I demonstrate the application of that method to the data through a series of chapters that focus on particular aspects of the girls and their families' lives; Part III contains the conclusion to the thesis.

I begin in Chapter One by mapping out the theoretical ground on which my analysis and arguments are developed. One of the main aims of this thesis is to bring together sociological and psychological theory in order to cast an alternative analytic light upon the dynamic relationship between internal and external worlds and the experience of schooling in the constitution of gendered and classed identities. The main theoretical traditions that I draw on to do this are Foucauldian and feminist post-structuralism, and the Kleinian and object relations schools of psychoanalysis. Key ideas from these traditions are set out and the ways in which they can be extended in order to provide a theoretical 'tool box' for the development of a psychosocial perspective is discussed.

Chapter Two provides a detailed description of the research project that forms the empirical basis of this thesis, by mapping out the aims, objectives, research designs and methodologies of *Project 4:21*. Not least, this chapter is intended to give the reader a clear idea of the variety, breadth and depth of this vast data-set. In the second part of the chapter I explore in detail the development and employment of a psychosocial approach to the analysis and interpretation of qualitative interview data. Here I consider the value of reflexivity and researcher subjectivity as a way of thinking about issues of difference in research encounters and interpretative accounts of qualitative data. I outline a research methodology that attempts to begin to take account of conscious and unconscious psychological processes and theorise their place, not only in the research process but in the very constitution of contemporary gendered and classed subjectivities.

Having anchored the thesis theoretically and then explained how those theoretical principles and concepts can be incorporated into the development of a methodology that is psychosocial, the following data-focused chapters in Part II demonstrate how I have applied this perspective to the analysis of the data of *Project 4:21*.

I begin this in Chapter Three by re-visiting the analysis of middle-class and working-class mothering practices that was made in *Democracy in the Kitchen* (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989)[7] and of the preparation of one of the groups of girls who took part in the study when they were four years old, for different modes of subjectivity. The chapter reviews the main arguments made in that book, arguments that are central to my analysis of data on the middle-class and working-class girls as they grow up. This book offered a different reading of class differences within mothering to that presented in most developmental psychology texts. Using examples, the chapter looks at the turning of housework into play and pedagogic tasks; how power and authority are differently played out between mothers and daughters; and, how difficult emotions are channelled into rational discourse. The primary argument made is that women are regulated through discourses relating to mothering and to the education of young children, and through that regulation, middle-class child-rearing practices are understood as 'normal' whilst working-class practices are pathologised. Implicit in some educational discourses and political rhetoric is the idea that middle-class practices in the home are the key to understanding why middle-class children do well at school, and that if working-class families would adopt these practices, then working-class children would also do as well. This is an assumption that is interrogated in the following chapter and in Chapter Five.

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[7] This book contains an analysis of data from Phases One and Two of *Project 4:21* (see Chapter Two for full description of the study).

In Chapter Four I present the case for the enduring importance of class when understanding the educational trajectories and life chances of the young women. By looking at the educational attainment of the girls, it is clear that there were stark inequalities between the middle-class and working-class girls, even at ten years old. In fact, the educational trajectories of the two groups got farther and farther apart as they moved through the education system. The majority of the middle-class girls had done very well at school and had outstanding GCSE and A level results; all but one of them had gone to university. In contrast, most of the working-class girls did not reach the government standard of examination success (five GCSEs at grade A-C). In this chapter I examine contemporary debates about girls' and boys' educational performance that emphasise gender differences and play down class inequalities. I do not follow the tradition in the sociology of education that concentrates on the consistent lack of working-class achievement. Instead, as well as looking at the normative markers of educational success and failure, I highlight the complex ways in which subjective constructions of success and failure, and importantly, happiness, circumscribed their lives and set boundaries for what was considered possible or impossible then and in the future. This is done through a case-study approach, focussing on two year old young women, Kerry and Naomi, who were originally 'matched' in the same nursery when they were four years old. Through an analysis of their accounts of their experiences at school and their parent's comments, I raise the idea that there are significant emotional costs of educational success as well as failure. This is a theme that is further developed in Chapters Five and Six.

Chapter Five focuses on a sample of working-class young women who went on to higher education between 1994 and 1996 and were on a firmer path towards a 'professional' career. The concept of 'hybridity', as it is used to understand shifts in the constitution of contemporary feminine subjectivities, is examined. It is argued that although hybridity may be a social and cultural fact, in this psychic economy there are no easy hybrids. Here, some of the more difficult emotional dynamics in

the young women's families, that nevertheless helped sustain their success, are explored. These include 'never asking for anything', parents as unable to help with finding a route to higher education, parents as burdened, difficult feelings of difference from family, envy, love and pride. This chapter highlights how the process of achieving educational success and of social mobility involved these young women crossing borders of social class, gender and ethnicity, of negotiation between competing subjectivities as other spaces, other possibilities were opened up. This chapter demonstrates that those few working-class girls who did succeed at school did so in quite different ways from the middle-class girls. The family practices implicated in their success are not to be understood as pathological or abnormal versions of middle-class ones, but are produced in an attempt to adapt to much more difficult conditions.

There are relatively few studies of the educational experiences of the middle-classes even though they are routinely held up as embodying 'normativity'. In Chapter Six I challenge simplistic and highly normalised notions of academic success and excellence as embodied in current educational policy and initiatives, revealing the emotional costs for both those girls and young women who were pushed towards high performance. I argue that the academic success of middle-class girls is historically specific and furthermore, produced on the back of a considerable amount of anxiety about failure. However, celebratory discourses of girls' attainment in the 1990s provided little room to make sense of the anxieties that consistently emerged in the interviews with the middle-class girls of *Project 4:21*. I demonstrate that the middle-class girls' educational lives were rigidly circumscribed by expectations of academic success, often to such an extent that quite outstanding performances were only ever viewed as average and ordinary. I explore the place of rationality, the suppression of the emotions in the pursuit of high academic attainment and the effect this had on the production of bourgeois femininity.

Chapter Seven brings together sociological and psychoanalytic theories to discuss the constitution of contemporary gendered and classed subjectivities. At the beginning of this chapter I briefly set out the various theoretical frameworks through which social class has been constructed and understood. I look at two of the most influential class theorists, Marx and Weber, and consider some of the legacies of their work for contemporary thinking about social class identities. While these approaches are important for understanding the structural and economic dynamics of social stratification and class formation, such meta-narratives are less helpful in shedding light on the micro-dynamics of social class. Additionally, both theorists worked with a conception of the human subject as rational, and, in Marx's case, entirely 'conscious'. I argue that social class identities are constructed on a number of interconnecting planes of human experience, which include that of the irrational unconscious. Through an analysis of interviews with working-class and middle-class parents and their daughters, I explore what they thought about their own class identity and about social class relations. These narratives reveal some of the ways in which social class difference was not only carried structurally and socially, but also emotionally and psychically.

Some postmodern theorists, such as Giddens, Bauman and Beck argue that the increasing instability of and flexibility in the labour market, alongside the increasing blurring of the divisions between work and non-work, are having a weakening effect on the significance of class and status. In Chapter Eight I note that arguments about the declining significance of work in relation to social class emerged just at the historical moment when paid employment was becoming more important than ever before to women. The move into waged labour has gained importance since the early 1980s as a powerful signifier of adult status for young women, as it previously was for young men, even while the means and routes through which it can be achieved remain profoundly differentiated according to social class, gender and 'race'. I explore the impact of changes in the structuring of the labour market since the 1970s on patterns of inequality among young women in the 1990s, and engage with debates about 'convergence' and 'polarisation' in

relation to women's paid labour, hybridity and the 'feminisation of work' thesis. I explore the diversity of school-to-work transitions made by the working-class and middle-class young women I studied; arguments concerning the need to 'reskill' the workforce; the drive towards credentialism; women at the top; work and motherhood, and; the young women's dreams of a working future.

In Part III, Chapter Nine, I summarise the main themes of the thesis and consider where, as academics and educationalists, the arguments put forward here might lead us in future research and practice.

At the heart of this thesis are ideas and questions about the nature, quality and dimensions of personhood, or the 'self'. I begin the thesis therefore with an explication of the theoretical foundations of that 'self' and explain how I am to use sociological and psychoanalytic theory to underpin a notion of self that is simultaneously individual and group and mutually constituted through individual, social, psychic and cultural processes.

PART II

CHAPTER ONE
A PSYCHOSOCIAL THEORETICAL TOOL BOX

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to outline the main conceptual tools that I will employ throughout this thesis. The metaphor of a toolbox helps me to explain what I think concepts and theories are for and why I have brought sociological and psychological theory together in a psychosocial perspective. First of all, concepts must work for their keep; they must help us to understand ourselves and the social world, and our internal lives *in relation to* that social world. Good theorisations and concepts illuminate meaning for us, assist us in making sense of what we experience; they may even reveal hidden aspects of experience that we did not know about, or refused to acknowledge, but once made visible allow other concepts and theories to be formulated. This is the case with feminist writers who have contributed towards theorisations of subjectivity and gender as well as those writers concerned with 'race' and ethnicity, whose work has pushed the boundaries of sociology and psychology and taken us into new terrains of thought.[1]

To carry the tool box analogy further, we cannot expect one tool to perform every single task, particularly when the task - making sense of human individual and social experience - is such a vast one. The starting point for the analysis presented in this thesis is that 'the self' is mutually constituted through a dense matrix of private and public, individual and group, psychic and social processes. Neither psychology nor social theory alone is sufficient for the job of unravelling and making sense of these processes. Neither are they, by themselves, adequate in capturing the extraordinary shades of human experience in everyday lives in, for instance, the ways in which gender, social class and 'race' are lived internally and externally. Given this complex relation between internal and external forces, I have brought together concepts from post-structuralism

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[1] There are too many to name here; just a few examples are Steedman (1986), Walkerdine (1986), Butler (1990), McRobbie (1991), hooks (1992), Mirza (1992), Rose (1993), Hey (1997a; 1999), Reay (1998a), Skeggs (1997a).

and psychoanalysis in a psychosocial perspective to provide concepts that can take account of the *interior* processes of the human mind (to look at individual and group emotions) with those concepts that relate to the *exterior*, public arenas of the social world (to examine structure and power). It is important at this point to acknowledge the tensions between Foucauldian post-structuralist and psychoanalytic conceptualisations of the subject and of agency: these will be explored later in this chapter.

Psychoanalysis and social theory are no strangers to one another: the engagement of psychoanalysis with the world beyond the consulting room has a long tradition, ranging from Freud's discussions of art, culture and society[2], through to the political writings of Marcuse (1966) and Fromm (1968) during the 1950s and 1960s, to the very lively and productive contemporary academic landscape where writers and researchers across numerous social science disciplines are generating innovative psychosocial perspectives that are challenging to both psychoanalysis and social theory. Psychoanalytically informed writers in sociology, social psychology, cultural studies, anthropology and geography have written on an increasing number of subjects including femininity and feminism (Mitchell 1974; Butler 1990, 1997; Benjamin 1994), the sociology of emotion (Craib 1994; Clarke 2003), social policy (Froggett 2002; Lucey and Reay 2002b), urban space (Pile 1996; Aitken 1998) and political theory (Giddens 1991; Rustin 2001).

My aim here is not to present a detailed explication of debates within post-structuralism or psychoanalysis; that is a project far beyond the space and scope of this thesis, and is the subject of many other texts. Instead, I intend to lay out the central concepts from within both of those theoretical traditions as they relate to ideas about the nature of reality, the production of knowledge, and the constitution of 'the self' – themes that are fundamental to my argument. In the chapters that follow, I critically engage with and in some cases extend these ideas through my analysis of the data of *Project 4:21*.

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[2] For example, 'Civilisation and its Discontents' (1930), 'Totem and Taboo' (1914).

Part of the challenge for me is how to think about and articulate the non-rational in the analysis of the relationship between personal lives, social institutions such as education, social and economic forces that shape historical periods, and processes of stratification such as gender, social class and 'race'. I maintain that, for this, a theoretical framework is needed that can work with both the social and psychic elements of human experience. It is for this reason that I use a psychosocial perspective, an approach that seeks to highlight the connections between spheres of experience that are more usually considered as separate and unconnected in the social sciences. The psychosocial approach that I am advocating is iterated and developed throughout this thesis, through sustained application of the concepts outlined here to the data from *Project 4:21*.

The chapter has three sections. The first section discusses key ideas in post-structuralism, in particular as they were developed by the leading post-structuralist philosopher Michel Foucault. It examines Foucault's conceptualisation of history, discourse and the development of knowledge through the power/knowledge nexus. Foucault's notion of discourse is a key concept in this thesis and is used to explore and understand the narrative frameworks through which the working-class and middle-class young women of *Project 4:21* made sense of themselves and their lives. Foucault's argument that it is on the basis of *managing* populations, rather than coercing and punishing them, that modern forms of government increasingly prefer to operate, is also one that is central to this thesis. My analysis of data across all phases of the study takes up Foucault's idea that demands for normality are a far greater tool of regulation than demands for obedience to a ruling power.

Other post-structuralist writers have expanded on Foucault's theorisations of power to explore how it works through the subjectification of modern subjects (Rose 1985, 1991, 1992; Lawler 2000). This is a self that must be constantly reflected upon, shaped and perfected to become an ideal, self-regulating, autonomous (and therefore 'free') subject. The notion that autonomy is at the centre of the project of both becoming a subject and of being subjectified, is one that is central to the arguments made in this thesis about the constitution of contemporary feminine subjectivity.

In the second part of the chapter I turn my attention to psychoanalysis. Here I outline some of the concepts that are pivotal in psychoanalytic understandings of individual psychological processes, beginning with the notion of the dynamic unconscious, and the psychoanalytic interpretation of anxiety. Psychoanalysis shares with post-structuralism a commitment to challenging the idea of a rational, knowing subject and instead assumes that there are levels of our perception and experience that are both deeply irrational and difficult to access. Drawing on the work of Sigmund Freud, Melanie Klein, and the object relations school of psychoanalysis, I discuss the idea that we are unconsciously defended against experiencing the anxiety that internal conflict brings, and that psychic defence mechanisms such as splitting, projection, projective identification and denial are developed in early infancy in order to cope with internal conflict and an inevitably disappointing environment. These are all concepts drawn on extensively in the thesis to analyse data on the young women and their families over the course of the longitudinal study.

In the third and final section of the chapter I consider how these concepts have been employed in various strands of social analysis. I examine the work of theorists who have brought together ideas from social theory with a psychoanalytic perspective on anxiety. For instance, writers and researchers in various disciplines concerned with exclusionary social practices organised around categories of gender, 'race', culture and class, have explored the intersectionality of psychic and social 'boundaries' and their construction, through unconscious defences of 'self' and other', 'us' and 'them' (Anthias and Yuval-Davies 1992; Pile 1996; Aitken 1998). This is a set of ideas that I use in later chapters to explore the construction of classed subjectivities and divisions. Also useful is work that considers how unconscious aspects of subjectivity and experience merge with social structures. For instance, the notion of 'social anxiety' is explored in the context of the experience of citizenship in contemporary Britain (Hoggett 2003) and the workings of social institutions and social policy (Froggett 2002).

PART ONE: POST-STRUCTURALISM

Structuralism

Until the middle of the twentieth century social theory was dominated by a number of *structural* theories of human existence. For example, Saussure's work on language suggested that meaning was to be found within the structure of a whole language rather than in the analysis of individual words (1974). Marx's thesis was that the 'truth' of human existence could be understood by an analysis of economic structures (1976). Meanwhile, psychoanalysts maintained that the 'unconscious' was the structure that shaped human psychic development and experience (Freud 1917). In the 1960s, the structuralist movement, based in France, attempted to synthesise the ideas of Marx, Freud and Saussure (Althusser 1969; Levi-Strauss 1966), rejecting the notion that each man is what he makes himself, and asserting the structuralist idea that the individual is shaped by sociological, psychological and linguistic structures over which s/he has no control[3].

Post-structuralism grew in response to some of the claims of structuralism. It is best described as a group of approaches motivated by some common understandings, not all of which will necessarily be shared by all post-structuralist theorists[4]. Post-structuralism is not one theory but a set of theoretical positions, which have at their core a self-reflexive discourse which holds in view a constant awareness of the uncertainty, contradictoriness, ambiguity and complex interrelations of texts and meanings.

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[3] For a good overview of the structuralist movement see Baert (1998).
[4] Some of the most influential theorists of the post-structuralist movement are Lacan (1977), Deleuze and Guattari (1977) Derrida (1978). It is with Foucault's work and influence that I am most concerned here.

Post-structuralism can be seen as the theoretical formulation of the postmodern condition[5]. Modernity, which began intellectually with the Enlightenment, attempted to describe the world in rational, empirical and objective terms. It assumed that there was a truth to be uncovered, a way of obtaining answers to the question posed by the human condition. There is none of this confidence and assurance in postmodernism; the underlying certainties that reason promised are swept away. Postmodern theories, including post-structuralism, are characterised by a rejection of totalizing, essentialist concepts that understand all phenomena through recourse to one explanatory concept (for example, the will of God, the economy, the unconscious).

The 'subject'

One of the most important contributions of post-structuralist theory has been a critique of the human subject. In the post-structuralist sense, 'subject' means something very different to the notion of 'individual', and is in many ways, in opposition to it. The idea of the individual emanates from the Renaissance and assumes that 'man' is a free-thinking, coherent, rational and autonomous agent, just like the individual in Descarte's assertion that 'I think therefore I am.' This individual is fully conscious; he knows what he says and does and why he says and does it. There is no notion of a psychic territory that may exist in contradiction to consciousness. Furthermore, his thinking processes stand outside history and culture. In the Cartesian model of the human subject then, we are offered 'a narrator who imagines that he speaks without simultaneously being spoken' (Sarup 1993: 1).

Post-structuralist theorists, including the French philosopher Michel Foucault, contested the concept of 'man' as developed by Enlightenment thought and

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[5] Postmodernism is a much contested term, but generally refers to a relational as opposed to an objectifying or dialectical world view (Lather 1995: 304). It is a term that came from the artistic community of New York in the 1960s and was taken up by European political, philosophical and cultural theorists in the 1970s, the most famous of whom was Lyotard. In his book *The Postmodern Condition* (1984) Lyotard rejected the grand narratives of the modern age and the liberating possibilities of science and philosophy.

idealist philosophy by asserting instead that 'subjects', rather than individuals, are culturally and discursively constructed, created in interaction as situated, symbolic beings. He was also profoundly critical of the meta-theories of structuralism: beliefs that claimed to give an exclusive objective explanation of reality. Unlike Marx, Foucault had no belief in an underlying structure or truth and rejected the notion that there was, if only we could find it, an objective viewpoint from which to analyse society. In contrast, Foucault maintained that the meanings and practices created and carried by culture create subjects, who occupy multiple and diverse, culturally-based sites of meaning; for instance as mothers, daughters, wives, workers, welfare clients, shoppers, patients, with each site evoking a different configuration of the self, different language uses, different foci of value and energy, different social practices, and so forth. This model of the subject, as dynamic and multiple, as always positioned in relation to particular discourses and practices, and as produced by these, is one that has been taken up extensively in sociology, cultural studies and social psychology (Rose 1991; Britzman 1995; Henriques et al 1998; Thomson et al 2003).

Subjects are embodied beings, whose subjectivity may be written on their bodies in various ways, primarily as 'race', gender, age or disability. Subjects, in the post-structuralist sense, oppose the notion of the metaphysical Cartesian individual. They are rooted in the everyday material practices and structures of their society; working, playing, having families, living as part of the material systems of society. It is from everyday activities, from relations with family, community and institutions, from the multiple pools of common meanings, symbols and practices which they share variously with their sub-cultural groups and with their society as a larger unit, that subjects take their meaning.

History, discourse and knowledge

Foucault rejected the idea that history is constituted through only those events that are considered important enough to get officially registered and recorded – usually the large-scale, spectacular ones. Instead, he turned his gaze to the vast range of small-scale, neglected or discredited phenomena that have been

denied a history. He argued that contained in these local, discontinuous, disqualified or illegitimate histories are sets of knowledges that are also disqualified because they are viewed as inadequate, naïve or simply too low down in the hierarchy (1972). Foucault therefore viewed knowledge as specific to a particular moment or period in history. It follows that as periods in history, or epistemes, change, so does a society's existing knowledge structures.

What is taken as knowledge is inextricably bound to the 'discourse' of a certain period. Discourse[6] in a Foucauldian sense is generally used to designate the forms of representation, codes, conventions and habits of language that produce specific fields of culturally and historically located meanings. Foucault's early writings (1971, 1972) were especially influential in developing this idea, in which he gave the terms 'discursive practices' and 'discursive formation' to the analysis of particular institutions and their ways of establishing orders of truth, or what is accepted as 'reality' in a given society. Discursive formations are equivalent to a cultural code, system of thought, or network that organises knowledge; in addition these formations are inseparable from knowledge. They determine the kinds of communicative practices societies will engage in, allowing some forms of discourse while prohibiting other forms.

Discursive formations are therefore subject to rules. Speakers express their knowledge through the articulation of utterances that conform to a specific set of rules. Rules that govern discursive formations may (in addition to many other things) permit certain statements to be made while excluding or silencing other possible statements. For example, Foucault (1978) discussed how in Victorian England, children were considered not to be sexual; statements and evidence to the contrary were generally denied and silenced. Rather than analyse these discursive practices in terms of their truth, Foucault analysed them in terms of their history or genesis and through an 'archaeology' of knowledge, to show the history of truth claims.

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[6] The Foucauldian notion of discourse is only one version of this concept. The notion of discourse in a general sense (as any regulated system of statements) has a long history. Also, discourse analysis is used in psycholinguistics to refer to a technique of analysing utterances (Wetherell et al 2001).

Foucault emphasised that rather than being defined by consensus, an established 'discursive formation' is delineated by the contradictory discourses it contains. This tolerance Foucault understood as a sign of stability rather than of conflict and potential change, as, for example, it would be understood in Marxism. Thus characterised, a given discursive formation gives definition to a particular historical moment or episteme. Discursive formations do nevertheless display a hierarchical arrangement and are understood as reinforcing certain already established identities or subjectivities (in matters of sexuality, status, or class, for example). These dominant discourses are understood as in turn reinforced by existing systems of law, education and the media.

Foucault was concerned to show how the development of knowledge was intertwined with the mechanisms of (political) power. In particular, he focused on the way that knowledge and the increased power of the state over the individual has developed in the modern era. In *The History of Sexuality* (1978) he argued that the rise of medical and psychiatric science had created a discourse of sexuality as deep, instinctual and mysterious. This discourse became accepted as the dominant explanation, and its assumptions began to seep into the discourse of the everyday. In this way discourses are constitutive practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak; the human subject's experience of their own sexuality is shaped and controlled by the discourses that claim to know and explain it. The search for knowledge does not simply uncover pre-existing 'objects'; it actively shapes and creates them. Discourses must therefore be understood in their social and political context.

Internalisation of regulation

Foucault sought to demonstrate that, from the inception of modern states, intervention and administrative control have defined their populations. Populations are controlled and disciplined through state sanctioning of the knowledge claims and practices of the human sciences: medicine, psychiatry, psychology, criminology and sociology (1966, 1972). These disciplines have established certain norms which are reproduced and legitimised through the

practices of teachers, social workers, doctors, judges, policemen and administrators. In this way, modern forms of state welfare are seen to be inextricably fused with ever tighter forms of social and psychological control. This, as elaborated below, is a theme that has been given much depth by Nikolas Rose (1985, 1991, 1999), and is important to the analysis and argument presented in this thesis.

The regulation of the modern subject does not happen only through coercion. In *Madness and Civilisation* (1971) and *Discipline and Punish* (1979) Foucault argued that one of the keys to the success of the modern state's regulation of the population has been to replace external violence by internalisation. In tracing the development of the prison as a modern form of punishment, he argues that from the beginning, the prison was a project for the transformation of individuals (1979). This is represented in the idea of the panopticon, a prison constructed as a circular building of cells where no prisoner would ever be sure that s/he was not being observed from a central watch-tower. In this conceptualisation of the penitentiary, prisoners would gradually begin to oversee, police and regulate their own behaviour. This constituted a new form of power, one that could be used in a variety of settings not explicitly concerned with regulation, such as hospitals and schools. Alongside the increased surveillance of subjects in different settings, was the development of practices of classification whereby detailed information on populations was gathered so that those populations could be 'known'. Rose (1985), focusing on Victorian and pre World War Two England, charts how vast amounts of statistical information, collected and analysed according to scientific principles, was used to inform the practices of professionals and aid them in the social administration of their clients.

Power/knowledge nexus

Foucault's work is useful in that it helps to deconstruct the one-dimensional character of power and the social domain which has characterised both Marxist

functionalist and structuralist social theory[7]. His work enables us to make links between a diverse, contrary social sphere and the many-sided, contradictory subject. In his view, power is not simply understood as a possession or a capacity; as the property of an individual or class. Neither do relations of power straightforwardly emanate from sovereign or state.

Power is not located in state apparatus – it passes through much finer channels and is much more ambiguous, since each individual has at least some power at her disposal. Excessive insistence on the state playing an exclusive role risks overlooking all the mechanisms and effects of power which do not pass directly via the state apparatus, yet often sustain the state more effectively than its own institutions. In fact, the state can only function on the basis of other already existing power networks such as the family, kinship, knowledge and so forth. (Henriques et al 1998: 79)

Foucault thus calls into question the Marxist notion of conflict between ruling and subordinate classes. In his conceptualisation, power is not simply a commodity that can be acquired or seized, rather it has the character of a network – its threads extend everywhere. Nor is power only a limiting force, as in the Marxist notion of power: it is productive, producing forms of knowledge and discourse, categories of normality, through the production of domains of objects and rituals of truth. Whilst for Marx, power conceals or 'distorts' truth, for Foucault it is through the operation of power that what is held to be the truth of a situation is produced. Knowledge cannot be seen as an unalloyed or see-through representation of objective truth, but is itself fundamentally tied up with the workings of power in specific social and political contexts and histories. So for instance, in Chapter Three I explore how the 'truths' that are contained in the category of the 'sensitive mother' are not objective or neutral, but have been produced within specific discourses. More than this, power also induces pleasure. Foucault asks 'if power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it?' (Foucault 1980: 119, quoted in Lawler 2000: 21).

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[7] See Craib (1992) for an explication of both of these traditions.

Rose (1992) notes that a commonplace view of power is of an oppressive, limiting force, that works from outside the person. It is against this model that 'true' knowledge becomes the key to defeating the hold that power can have upon us, because by gaining truth, we also gain the capacity to see through power. Here, knowledge has the capacity to liberate us from the workings of power. This calls to mind the Enlightenment notion of a 'true self' that is knowable through reason and self-reflection. Once known, this 'autonomous' self can stand beyond the workings of power, in order to realise its full potential, and, to be 'free'. Autonomy, in this formulation, is presented as lying at the opposite pole to regulation and government, and indeed, to the workings of power (Lawler 2000: 20). That autonomy is the path towards 'freedom' for young women is one of the themes of my thesis. However, my analysis of the narratives of the working-class and middle-class young women who took part in *Project 4:21* reveals that the kind of self-sufficient, powerful agency contained in this notion of autonomy is mostly fictitious, and always, even where partially achieved, entails considerable psychological losses.

Foucault's work has not been without its critics. Because he rejects the notion of opposing classes, Foucault has little to say about class struggle, class consciousness, interest or ideology. Furthermore, some feminists have criticised Foucault's conceptualisation of power, arguing that although his work was influential in allowing women to see power relations in the social construction of sexuality and the body, his own gender blindness allowed him to ignore the ways women experience men's power over them (Holland and Ramazanoglu 1995: 279; Braidotti 1991).[8]

Although Foucault's conceptualisations of power cannot take account of external social forces that may have a logic of their own, the usefulness of his work is at other levels (Henriques at al 1998). The primary strength of Foucault's concept of 'discourse' is that it enables us able to examine the ways in which power is deployed through meaning; this gives us a useful way of looking at how meanings articulate with social practices (Lawler 2000).

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[8] See McNay (1992) and McLaren (1997) for a discussion on Foucault and feminism, and Fraser (1989) for debates on gender and post-structuralism.

Autonomy and the regulation of the self

Nikolas Rose in *Governing The Soul* (1991) argues that autonomy is at the centre of the project of becoming a contemporary subject *and* of being subjectified. Within this context there is a 'matrix of knowledges' (Lawler 2000:23) emanating from medicine, psychology, psychiatry and pedagogy, through which truths about the self and its relations with others are produced. This interconnecting web of knowledges, which have been coined the 'psy complex' (Rose 1991) have been taken up in a widespread way, by social workers, personnel managers and probation officers as well as psychologists, counsellors and therapists, who have become experts in subjectivity, in 'classifying and measuring the psyche, in predicting its vicissitudes, in diagnosing the causes of its troubles and prescribing remedies' (Rose 1991: 3). These knowledges are presented as truths about human nature and are repeated across numerous institutional, political and cultural sites: in classrooms, offices, doctors surgeries, self-help guides, television chat shows.

In modern discourses of the self-knowing, self-governing citizen, autonomy is presented as a state of selfhood that is achievable. However, it cannot be taken for granted; it can only be achieved through constant work on the self. The 'real self' can only be achieved through unceasing self-inspection, self-problematisation, self-monitoring and confession; what Rose terms the 'government of the soul':

> The government of the soul depends upon our recognition of ourselves as ideally and potentially certain sorts of person, the unease generated by a normative judgement of what we are and could become, and the incitement offered to overcome this discrepancy by following the advice of experts in the management of the self. The irony is that we believe, in making our subjectivity the principle of our personal lives, our ethical systems, and our political evaluations, that we are, freely, choosing our freedom. (Rose 1991: 11).

In this thesis I argue that young women have had to understand themselves in particular ways (certainly differently to how their mothers viewed themselves when they were the same age) in order to fulfil ideals about what it is to be a young women in this day and age. Through an analysis of the data of *Project*

4:21 I demonstrate that the production of themselves as contemporary, autonomous, feminine subjects requires the unrelenting practice of 'techniques of the self'. However, this subjectification of the self is a project that is never complete, never fully achieved and done, 'but an uneasy practice of repetition and its risks' (Butler 1997: 30), that must be gone over and over in never-ending texts and practices of self-scrutiny. The autonomy promised through these processes appears as the very opposite to government and regulation. Yet government and regulation are inherent in these meanings and these practices. In becoming autonomous subjects, we are subjected to the workings of power. And it is, at least in part, through the relationship of the self to itself that governmentality is brought into play. In not (apparently) being regulated, contemporary Euroamericans are increasingly regulating themselves (Lawler 2000: 24-25). Autonomy is also a valuable characteristic of the new citizen-consumer of Third Way politics. In this discourse, one that emphasises responsibilities rather than rights, citizens are increasingly held responsible for the rational management of their health, welfare and education, and failures in any of these areas are viewed as their own fault (Lucey and Reay 2002a and b; Lucey 2004).

The next part of this chapter focuses on core concepts in psychoanalytic thought. It would be incorrect to speak about 'psychoanalytic theory' as if it were one unified body of work. The history and present-day condition of psychoanalysis both as a practice and a theoretical discipline has been and continues to be a highly contested and shifting set of ideas and approaches. The following section refers most explicitly to the work of Sigmund Freud, Melanie Klein, and the object relations theorists John Bowlby and Donald Winnicott. It begins to draw out how concepts originally conceived to theorise the structure and development of the human psyche, can also be extended to help us think about the connections between individual, internal, psychic worlds and group, external, social, worlds.

PART TWO: KEY CONCEPTS IN PSYCHOANALYSIS

Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) laid down the core conceptual foundations of psychoanalytic thought and is often considered to be the 'founding father' of psychoanalysis. He is probably the most well-known and popularised psychoanalyst and his ideas have been highly influential in a wide range of areas, from child-care to advertising. But it would be a serious mistake to think that psychoanalytic theory stopped with Freud. During the last 90 or so years his work has been variously developed and disagreed with by numerous post-Freudian theorists including Melanie Klein (1946, 1952a, 1959), those who developed the object relations school of psychoanalysis such as Donald Winnicott (1957), John Bowlby (1971) and Wilfred Bion (1962), the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1977) and feminist post-structuralists such as Julia Kristeva (1989) and Juliet Mitchell (1974).

The unconscious

All psychoanalytic theory is underpinned by the concept of the unconscious. This has remained one of the key features that differentiates it from academic psychology and most other disciplines within the social sciences. The existence of an unconscious was proposed by Freud in the late nineteenth century when he observed that patients under hypnosis related memories, stories and wishes, of which they had no memory when awake. Although excluded from consciousness, these thoughts nevertheless had powerful effects on the individual. They affected moods, behaviour and even brought about changes in physical functioning. Such findings led Freud to arrive at some of his most fundamental conclusions regarding unconscious processes, repression and symbolism. He proposed that part of the personality sets up a resistance against certain memories, impulses or wishes. They are inadmissable into conscious thought because they are felt by the conscious part of the personality to be bad, forbidden, or because they simply do not make sense to the person. However, although they are repressed, they are not passive, but remain dynamic in the person's unconscious and continually strive for expression. This material finds symbolic expression through symptoms - the symptom is a

compromise between the repressed ideas and feelings, and the repressing forces. Therefore symptoms have meanings. It is important to stress that in Freud's model such intra-psychic conflict and compromise solutions do not only lie in the domain of mental pathology, but are an essential part of human development.

The idea that our behaviours and interactions are partly the product of irrational and unconscious processes has profound implications for much contemporary social science and policy discourse. For example, the idea of the unconscious seriously disrupts current conceptions of the subject as one who makes choices based on a rational, conscious process. It challenges the notion that we always know what we are doing and why we are doing it and instead acknowledges that the unconscious can contain many obstacles to the exercise of conscious choice and to the fulfilment of consciously held goals (Rustin 1991).

A further aspect of the relation between the conscious and unconscious is the idea that there is continuity and coherence between apparently unconnected conscious thoughts - ones that we are immediately aware of and can recall to consciousness at will. Here, we can think of there being gaps in and between conscious thoughts which unconscious ideas fill in: sometimes it is only by bringing such unconscious ideas into consciousness that we can make full sense of the thoughts. This is an idea that is fully explored in Chapter Two with regard to developing a psychosocial methodology where I discuss how unconscious thoughts sometimes surfaced during interviews with the young women of this research and myself, and how they came to impact upon research encounters. The idea of making central that which is usually excluded, marginalised or understood as separate and unconnected is a useful one for social science analysis. Psychoanalytically inflected social analysis follows Freud who used phenomena such as parapraxes (slips of the tongue) and dreams as evidence of the existence of the unconscious.

Anxiety

The concept of anxiety is central to psychoanalysis and is closely connected to the unconscious. It is important to be clear about how this understanding of anxiety differs from traditional sociological and psychological conceptions. There is a significant body of research and literature which is concerned with anxiety, fear and stress, ranging from examination anxiety (Eady 1999) to fear of crime (Hales et al 2001). This work tends to operate on the premise that anxiety relates to a conscious process or state and therefore can be quantified. Implicit too is the idea that once identified and measured, anxiety is open to intervention that speaks to a person's rational side and rests on the idea that a fear or concern can simply be treated or resolved by pointing to the facts. For example, enduring concerns about the poor examination performance of vast numbers of working-class pupils, are responded to by an appeal to the 'facts' of academic rigour in both teaching and examining processes (Altrichter and Elliott 2000). This is quite different to the way in which anxiety is understood in psychoanalytic theory – as inevitable, 'normal' and absolutely central to the development of the personality (Freud 1936; Klein 1952b). It is important to stress that in the psychoanalytically informed psychosocial framework that I am proposing in this thesis, it is anxiety that circulates at the level of the *unconscious* that is the focus of attention.

Klein, anxiety and the earliest moments of life

I now want to turn to the influential work of Melanie Klein who was concerned with the development of the mental structure and psychic activity in the human infant from birth and who built upon and considerably extended Freud's ideas about the organisation and structure of psychic defences through her work with young children. It is worth evoking those earliest days, weeks and months of life. As small babies we are physically powerless and completely dependent on the care of others: we cannot feed or keep ourselves warm; we cannot even move if we are in danger; our vision is poor; we have no words to communicate our needs; we have no sense of time; objects (we don't know yet that they are

people) come and go, some bringing pleasure such as milk and warmth and some discomfort or pain, such as a nappy change. It is not difficult to imagine that this developing awareness, that is both conscious and unconscious, of unpredictable experiences of warmth and care, threat and danger, and satisfaction and frustration, is then a source of great anxiety.

In this new realm of sensation, where there is no language to help process and rationalise this novel and strange world, the baby's processing of experience is at a primary level, that is, at the level of the unconscious and therefore of phantasy. This special spelling of the word `phantasy', with the *ph*, was adopted by the English translators of Freud in order to differentiate the psychoanalytical significance of the term, i.e. predominantly or entirely unconscious phantasies, from the popular word `fantasy', meaning conscious day-dreams, fictions and so on (Laplanche and Pontalis 1988). The psycho-analytical term `phantasy' essentially connotes *unconscious* mental content, which may or may not become conscious. Rather than stories which we make up to amuse ourselves i.e. 'fantasies', 'phantasies' may be described as '"stories" we are deeply involved in and convinced by and which go on independently of our conscious awareness or intention' (Segal 1985: 15). At first the main foci of these phantasies are the mother and the source of milk, the breast – both understood as the primary carer. In dynamic relation to changing external circumstances, the infant experiences and builds an *internal* reality, made up of shifting emotional states and unconscious phantasies; love of the breast that appears when s/he is hungry as well as rage and hatred of the breast that keeps her/him waiting. Melanie Klein developed this idea further and suggested that this internal reality may also provoke anxiety about the destructive power of one's own feelings towards the mother (1946, 1952a and b).

All of this means that our phantasies are active well before words are. Julia Segal cites the example from the psychoanalyst Susan Isaac of a 20 month old girl who was terrified of her mothers' shoe which had a flapping sole. Because she could not speak the little girl screamed and backed away. It was 15 months later that she suddenly pointed to where the shoes were and said to her mother in a frightened voice 'They might have eaten me right up'. 'The words articulate

the phantasy, but what is lost in this verbal version is the screaming terror which accompanied the original phantasy experience' (Segal 1985: 34). Words are used to take away fears, to modify anxieties that arose before words could be used. Anxieties which we can name, talk about, perhaps attach to an experience such as 'I'm worried that I don't work hard enough at school' are in our conscious minds as thoughts and feelings (see Chapters Four, Five and Six). They may come and go as circumstances change. But within a psychoanalytic framework, these consciously articulated fears and worries are the outward representations of anxiety that is held at the level of the unconscious. Concerns about not working hard enough may be a way of representing unconscious fears of failure that represent un-survivable threats to the ego – fears of annihilation that are literally unthinkable, unameable in the conscious mind. Such threats may resonate with the fears of survival and dependence experienced as a helpless infant.

In psychoanalytic terms then anxiety is a fairly constant feature of life from infancy. However, it is not an entirely negative force, but is rather an integral, necessary and 'normal' force in the construction of 'self'. It provides one way in which we learn to cope with and adapt to the tensions between the satisfaction and frustration of our wishes and desires. It is one of the influences stimulating an internal re-arrangement in the light of external factors and relationships. The experience of unconscious anxiety continues throughout life and is often provoked when we encounter wider social factors that have the capacity to destabilise or threaten our sense of self and/or our needs. The opportunities for such destabilisation are numerous, including when we encounter institutional rules and practices; at school, at work or as the recipients of welfare. Theoretical understanding of this dynamic between the inner world of anxiety and fear and the external world of social interaction and institutional process highlights the limitations of a conception of the subject and subjectivity as only premised upon rationality (Lucey 2004).

Transference and Counter-transference

The concept of transference was developed by Freud in the clinical, analytic setting, where he discovered that patients unconsciously transferred emotionally significant relationships from childhood onto the therapist. Freud also theorised that many different kinds of earlier emotional experiences were revived 'not as belonging to the past, but as applying to the physician at the present moment' (1905: 116). Freud believed every conflict had to be struggled over in the sphere of transference, and maintained that this was an essential part of the therapeutic process.

In the clinical setting transference is generally defined as unconscious archaic images, usually from the patient's childhood, that the patient imposes on the analyst. Counter-transference can refer to an analyst's unconscious response to the patient or to significant people in the patient's life, or to the patient's transferences. Importantly, such transferences need not only be negative, they can also be extremely positive. In Chapter Two I consider how various transferences and counter transferences took place between myself and research participants during interviews and discuss some of the effects this had on the shape of research encounters. Now, I turn to a discussion of the various mechanisms and processes through which we psychically defend ourselves against anxiety.

Psychic Defences Against Anxiety

Splitting

From her observations of infants Klein argued that the process of splitting was the most basic and earliest of psychic defences against anxiety. Splitting is the basis of other, more complex and sophisticated psychic defensive processes (see below) that are developed as the human infant grows and gains more experience of her environment. From the perspective of the new born infant Klein paints a world that is polarised: full of delicious sensations, as well as unpleasant ones. For the baby who has no sense of boundaries between self

and other, some of these sensations are felt to emanate from inside the self and can feel persecutory – we can see how a distressed, crying baby seems literally to be wracked by its own tears and cries. Klein stated that splitting is a necessary and normal part of emotional development, enabling the baby to bring order into this chaotic environment (1946, 1952b). Splitting is a way of organizing and keeping separate good and bad experiences and feelings. It allows the baby to keep all those parts of her/himself (and those of the mother – the baby has no sense of separateness from the mother), which promote life and growth, safe from those sources inside and outside that threaten to destroy life. This is necessary to enable the small infant to sustain hope and trust that good experiences will return and thus make intolerable anxiety bearable.

Denial

Denial involves a refusal to recognise or appreciate the inner significance of an experience and, like other unconscious processes, is linked to the management and regulation of anxiety. According to Klein, denial is specifically involved in defensive processes, and particularly the denial of some part of the mind, or of psychic reality (1946). While the mechanism of projection, discussed below, can be used defensively, typically to protect oneself from the full knowledge of one's own capacity for aggression, 'Denial is a powerful emotional defence against acknowledging painful, distressing or troubling knowledge' by keeping it at the level of the unconscious (Pajaczkowska and Young 1992: 201).

Projection

Projection is a defensive process closely connected to splitting (Segal 1988). The mechanism of projection is used to expel feelings, positive and negative, out of ourselves and onto another person or object. 'Objects' may be people, places or other items from the external world that become invested with instinctual energies, emotions or ideas. As such they come to 'stand for' parts of our inner self, albeit at an unconscious level. Destructive feelings such as hate, envy and anger which belong to us but which we cannot acknowledge as our own, are then felt to be inside someone else; at first the mother, father and

siblings (Frosh 2002). This defensive organisation has implications for adult and social relations too: aggressive and harmful feelings can be attributed to particular political, social or racial groups, as well as individuals, things, spaces and places (Aitken 1998). These 'bad' objects are then demonised.

I have already mentioned that in Kleinian psychoanalytic theory the infant is capable of angry or hateful feelings towards the mother that keeps her/him waiting. Another way of protecting ourselves from the full knowledge of our *own* capacity for aggression is to project out good aspects of the self in order for them to be kept safe from our own destructive aggression. This 'good' object then becomes 'idealised' and psychically separated off so that the goodness is preserved and kept from danger. Of course we all have a tendency to idealise and it is important to be able to. This will get mobilised for instance, when we fall in love. Idealisation also helps us in adversity to maintain hope for a brighter future. On the other hand, a need to continue to idealise the partner at all costs would bar the way to a more realistic love-relationship based on being able to accept at least some of the faults of the other person.

Splitting and projection make it possible to maintain one kind of attitude and feeling at a time, leaving whatever contradicts it out of our conscious mind and projecting it onto someone else. Kleinians would understand this tendency to keep opposing emotions separated, whether in different people and groups, or from one another in one's own mind, as coming from the wish to avoid inner conflict (Segal 1979; Salzberger-Wittenberg 1996).

Psychic defences can operate to construct and maintain boundaries, to keep apart the 'good' from the 'bad', 'us' from 'them', 'self' from 'other'. Ideas about who we are like and who we are different from take shape within parameters about who can and cannot 'belong', based on an infinite range of 'credentials' including skin colour, gender, religion, language, clothes, where you were born, what kind of house you live in, what kind of school you go to. This provides a useful way of thinking about how identities of individuals and of groups are formed along axes of social divisions and is used in my analysis of how classed

and racialised identities connect to geographical location and housing in Chapter Seven.

Projective identification

Paul Hoggett maintains that 'Klein's theory of projective identification (Klein 1952) is without doubt one of the essential conceptual discoveries of the psychoanalytic movement' (2000: 39). Projective identification is closely connected to splitting in that it also involves the process through which one individual puts unwanted feelings into another i.e. projection. But unlike projection, the person does not fully disavow what is projected. Bion (1962) refers to the process of projective identification as the relationship between container and contained. In his analysis the 'contained' are the elements of one's subjectivity that are unbearable (feelings and phantasies), so they become located in and mapped upon the other – another person, group, place, political party. The 'container' is that which, voluntarily or not, contains these projected elements. Bion likens this relationship to processes in the gut: projected emotional material is that which cannot be digested. Thus, when groups, or individuals become the container for the consistent projections of others, they must, eventually, become clogged-up with all the undigested material that those others continually thrust into them. The object of the projections not only comes to be seen by the subject as containing the projected elements of the self, but is also unconsciously manoeuvred into having and even enacting the feelings, states and characteristics that have been projected (Klein 1952b).

> Having thus subtly influenced the object into actually feeling or enacting the projected part (i.e. introjectively identifying with it), the subject now seeks to control it actively or passively. In this way, the subject comes to feel a spurious sense of mastery over unacceptable, denied or disowned parts of the self: through a peculiar sort of 'empathy' or identification with the object that now contains them, the subject feels relief, for now the disturbing contents are no longer felt to be in the self but in the other whom he has unconsciously (but not necessarily 'intentionally') manoeuvred into embodying them. (Carveth 1998: http://www.clas.ufl.edu/ipsa/journal/1998_home.shtml)

This is a double alienation, for what the self is forced to disown the other is forced to internalise. It is this process that Fanon identified in the process of racism – a violent cultural projection in which black subjects have to carry what white subjects cannot own (Fanon 1969). The idea that the recipient of such projections becomes forced to play a part in the other's unconscious phantasy (Hoggett 2000: 40) is one that is taken up throughout this thesis. For instance, in Chapter Six, I explore the ways in which fears and phantasies of failure amongst the middle-class young women and their parents are projected onto the working-classes, who then become the repository or 'container' of the fears that the middle-class young women find so hard to carry.

Love, ambivalence and reparation

It is important to stress that although a Kleinian model of human development does not shy away from negative emotions, it is balanced with powerful positive emotions such as love and reparation. Within the relational framework of Klein, anxieties and fears are closely connected to the difficulties of being simultaneously an individual and social animal (Bion 1961), and the struggle between good and bad feelings that lie at the centre of psychic life. Conflicts and tensions are set up between opposing desires and needs: the desire for individual freedom versus the desire to belong to a 'good' community, desire for connection versus fear and contempt of dependency (Froggett 2002), and so on. However, in recognizing this struggle, a Kleinian perspective privileges the possibility of making good the damage we are capable of, thereby offering an optimistic view of humankind (Rustin, 2001).

In attempting to make sense of and cope with a less than 'perfect' environment, the growing infant will gradually learn that the good and the bad 'breast' (i.e. the one that gives and nourishes and the one that withholds and frustrates) are, in fact, the same object and the tendency towards splitting will diminish. Under the patience and nurturance of the primary caregiver, the child will be able to achieve a more integrated and realistic position. This responsive holding and graduated failure is the prototype of all future forms of containment that we find

in families, communities and institutions. It allows us to tolerate the uncertainty and frustration of an imperfect world (Froggett, 2002: 42).

This integration involves recognizing and learning to relate to 'others' who are not 'me', who are independent of me. Importantly, it involves the tolerance and acceptance of the basic fact that good and bad co-exist in individuals, groups, the self. This is no mean feat for children or adults as it involves much conflict and struggle and we cannot realistically expect to achieve it fully or all of the time. Thus ambivalence, whereby opposing feelings such as love and hate coexist in the same object or context is a more realistic position.

Creative tensions

There is a tension in my argument that in order to understand the production of subjects we need a blend of Foucauldian post-structuralism and psychoanalysis. It would seem that there are some theoretical sites at which these two perspectives do not meet. Broadly speaking, psychoanalytic perspectives are premised on the idea that what we call the self contains a number of characters who speak in different voices. This view might sound congruent with the post-structuralist idea of the de-centred self. But there are crucial, although subtle distinctions. A post-structuralist perspective sees the self as split, and ultimately a delusion (albeit a consoling one). Benjamin points out that the difference between this perspective, in which the self is a chimera, and a Kleinian and object relations perspective, is that Klein and the object relations school grasp that there must *be* a subject in the first place, an 'I', that is capable of doing the splitting, that can split love from hate, me from not me (1994: 235). It is the case that Kleinian theory, more than any other account of human subjectivity, draws our attention to the powerful and potentially destructive splitting processes at work within the psyche. However, both Klein and the object relations school are 'equally insistent on the presence of equally powerful processes of integration at work within the mind, and, by implication, within society as well' (Hoggett 2000: 19).

As I have outlined in Part One of this chapter, post-structuralism contains a significant critique of the idea of agency; as an impossible phantasm. I follow this argument as put forward by Foucault in the context of the construction of modern liberal democratic citizens and the power such discourses have to forge desires of an always powerful, never failing, forever independent subjectivity. As Rose argues, the pursuance of such goals for the self requires unrelenting and psychologically costly labour, and the possibility of this being achieved is mostly fictitious. This is also my position. And yet accounts of human subjectivity, that argue that the self is primarily a product of language, culture and discourse and that agency is entirely chimerical, leave absences and silences. As illustrative of Benjamin's point about there having to be an 'I' that becomes split, or does the splitting, Hoggett invokes the new-born baby:

> This 'I' asserts agency in the first hours of life by spitting out the breast, even at this point in development it is capable of refusal, of negative agency. The 'I' that spits things out or takes them in (food, ideas) through processes of introjection and projection is not structured by language. (Hoggett 2000: 20)

This perspective tells me something of what I know for my own self, and what the young women and parents of *Project 4:21* communicated to me. That is, that despite our painful splitting and destructive fragmentation, and despite the workings of oppressive and regulative power to which we are daily subject, we nevertheless have some capacity to bear difficult things, to repair some of the damage done to us and by us, and to take pleasure from shifting versions of the self (Hoggett 2000: 21).

I would argue that bringing together Foucault, Klein and the object relations school has fostered a *creative* tension; one which allows me to understand both the place of subjectification (the production of 'the subject' in discursive practices) and subjectivity (the lived experience of being a subject). It has been argued by many (for example, Rose 1996), that Foucault's later work can be used as the basis of an account of the 'care of the self', which perfectly describes the autonomous subject of neo-liberalism, making any recourse to arguments about unconscious processes unnecessary and, in fact, counter-productive in the sense that the experience of an unconscious or interiority is

one of the significant psychological fictions of the twentieth century. Yet, this fiction functions in truth, as Foucault put it. We are created as modern subjects with an interiority and it is through that interiority that we live our emotions. My aim here then is to recognise the powerful place of those emotions in producing the very practices and subjects we are talking about. Such emotionality is absent from the hyper-rationality of Foucault and his Others. It is that creative tension which helps me to go beyond modernist psychological and sociological accounts of structure and agency and think about what a psychosocial account might look like (Walkerdine et al 2001).

So far I have outlined some core psychoanalytic concepts as applied to the individual, or more accurately the individual in her or his relations with the primary care giver. In the following section I look how these concepts have been employed in various strands of social analysis to consider how they might be used to cast an alternative light on social life.

PART THREE: PSYCHOANALYSIS AND SOCIAL ANALYSIS

At the beginning of this chapter I signalled a significant and growing body of contemporary work in sociology, social psychology, cultural studies, anthropology and geography that engages with psychoanalysis in order to extend research and writing on a diverse range of subjects. There is not space here to do justice to the range of psychoanalytically informed research and writing in all of these social science disciplines. My aim in this section is to introduce some writers who have used a psychosocial approach in their work and by doing so, illustrate the explanatory power that a synthesis of psychoanalytic and sociological theory in a psychosocial perspective can achieve[9].

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[9] There is a large body of work from feminist writers who have critically engaged with Freudian and Lacanian accounts of feminine sexuality and subjectivity (Mitchell, Butler, Rose). I do refer to the work of these influential feminist thinkers and make use of their work, but I do not want to engage heavily with these debates as it would take me too far away from the focus of this thesis. Additionally, it has been the Kleinian and the object relations schools of psychoanalysis, rather than the Lacanian school, that have contributed most to

Self and 'other': defence mechanisms and society

Paul Hoggett brings together ideas from social theory with a psychoanalytic perspective on anxiety to develop the notion of 'social anxiety' and applies it to the experience of citizenship and subjectivity in contemporary Britain.

> The concept of `social anxiety' refers to the anxiety that the western citizen has about a range of intimate fates which could befall him (...) fear of death, fear of physical and mental degeneration, fear of pain and sudden incapacity, fear of madness, fear of enduring and chronic mental turmoil, fear of indigence, fear of violation of bodily integrity as a consequence of violent attack or rape, fear of helplessness and loneliness, fear of failure (Hoggett 2003: 11).

Within a psychoanalytic framework, anxiety is understood as operating, not only at a conscious level, the level at which it can be named, even talked about, but just as significantly at the level of the unconscious, where, far from being 'out of sight out of mind', such fears continue to exert their power beyond the rationalising influence of language. Object relations theorists such as Klein and Bion suggest that recognising that this is an *indwelling* fear makes sense of our constant striving but fundamental inability to correctly represent it (Klein 1952; Bion 1962). In Klein's theorisation, this unnameable fear is converted into 'I am frightened of' and in this way is located ('projected') outside of ourselves (Hoggett 1992).

> `I fear' becomes `I am frightened of', the danger within becomes the danger without – the mad, the bad, the sad, the old, the sick, the vulnerable, the failures, and so on, receive not just our compassion but also our fear, contempt and hatred. (Hoggett 2003: 11)

We can also 'split' off or expel difficult and unwanted feelings such as hate and destructiveness out of ourselves and onto another person or object through projection. Destructive feelings belonging to us which are intolerable are then felt to be inside someone else; at first the mother, father and siblings and later in life they are attributed to all kinds of people, or to particular political, social or

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my theorisations of the mutual constitution of the self and the social world. Furthermore, both Kleinian and object relations theoretical frameworks have been extensively applied to the analysis of empirical data, in the fields of social organisations, social policy, family research and education, whilst Lacanian-inspired work tends to remain at the level of the abstract.

racial groups, as well as objects, spaces and places. Such processes, of splitting and projection can be understood as operating in the service of boundary construction and maintenance; of separating out and keeping apart the 'good' from the 'bad', 'us' from 'them'. Although functioning on an individual, emotional level, such defensive organisation is intimately linked to the social identity of the self and the construction of collectivities and communities (Lucey and Reay 2002b). In empirical and theoretical work on white, working-class racism (Cohen 1999), these concepts have been used to good effect, to examine how the 'psychical process(es) through which a fear cannot be contained is visited upon the external world where it fuses and blends with the real violence and poison of our social environment' (Hoggett 1992: 364).

For urban sociologists and geographers, the work of various object relations theorists (Winnicott 1957; Klein 1959; Bion 1962) allows an exploration of the subtleties and ambiguities of intrapsychic processes in the construction of what individuals and groups come to know about themselves and the world. These are ideas that have been taken up by cultural geographers in order to theorise the racialisation of space. David Sibley argues that object relations theory 'suggests ways in which boundaries emerge, separating the 'good' and the 'bad', the stereotypical representations of others which inform social practices of exclusion and inclusion but which, at the same time, define the self' (1995: 5). Hoggett (1992) explores how racisms, in the context of massive social and economic changes in the East End of London produced and shaped the defensive strategies (and therefore the geographies) of Bengali and white working-class communities in the area. Asserting that an essential component of the process through which we map out personal geographical space and broader conceptions of 'community' is carried out on a psychic level, he argues that this involves the construction of emotional 'defences'. Research carried out with children living on run-down estates found that many children used the phrases 'keeping out of it' and 'keeping to yourself' to describe the main strategies they used for coping with difficult interactions on the estate and can be seen as important attempts at building essential psycho-spatial defences (Reay and Lucey 2000). In Chapter Seven I discuss how localities, and the people who live in them, are read along racial, ethnic and class lines. Across

the thesis I demonstrate that the construction of boundaries and horizons which operate in space and time must also be understood as taking place simultaneously on an emotional, psychic level, through conscious and unconscious processes.

There is a body of work that uses Kleinian ideas to focus on the ways in which public organisations and institutions deal with social anxieties (Menzies Lyth 1988; Obholzer and Zagier Roberts 1994). This work explores how unconscious states of mind operate in dynamic conjunction with the way in which organisations and/or work processes are structured. Seen in this light, authoritarian regimes and depersonalised modes of relating to people, whether employees, patients or clients, are defensive formations, whose core purpose is to hold at bay the mental conflict and pain aroused in the performance of the tasks of the organisation, whether these be tasks of teaching, nursing or industrial production. This conflict stems in part from being confronted with aspects of subjectivity that we find difficult to accept in ourselves, such as vulnerability and dependency (Fink, 2004). These projected and disowned aspects of the self are then viewed in others with, in the words of Hoggett above, 'fear, contempt and hatred'. This work has been influential in psychosocial analyses of welfare policy.

A key theme here is that in a culture that is in flight from dependency, where subjects are incited to view and make themselves through discourses of the 'ideal' citizen-consumer - autonomous and self-sufficient - contradictory aspects of experience (i.e of dependency and failure) may be reflected and supported in welfare policy. Hoggett suggests that the welfare state is 'founded upon ambivalence' because it denies dependence and vulnerability and instead puts this on to the 'other' (2003: 11). Discourses of contemporary feminine subjects, who are conceptualised as powerful, autonomous choosers who can quite literally make anything happen and do not need anyone else, contain such denials on a grand scale. Examples of this might be splitting between 'good' and 'bad' mothers (as discussed in Chapter Three), or between those young women who succeed and those who fail in education. This is not an entirely 'top-down' process: governments and their policies also have to 'hold' those

aspects inherent in the lives of subjects that the subjects themselves do not want to face and, in doing so, state administrations can set themselves up to do tasks that are impossible, such as eradicate educational failure. We can then have a situation in which 'failure is inevitable' (Hoggett, 2003, p.14). This is explored in relation to the question of why most of the working-class young women who took part in Project 4:21 did not 'succeed' educationally in Chapters Four and Five.

A popular view of psychoanalysis as based on and encouraging a level of individualism which rules out its usefulness for socialist political projects is perhaps a dominant one at this time. Certainly, classical Freudian psychoanalytic theory tends to marginalise the materiality of people's lives. This is not good enough if psychoanalysis is to contribute towards a politics of human development and social justice. As Walkerdine points out 'Psychodynamic forces: the wishes, drives, emotions, defences are produced in conflicting relations, in a context in which materiality, domination and oppression are central, not peripheral' (1995: 15). And yet one of the important features of a Kleinian perspective for me is the stress it gives to the relational, dynamic nature of defences - that they are never one-sided, but always dependent on the participation of another. This has given me a way of looking at and making more visible the defensive mechanisms which are central to the formation and reproduction of *all* social classes. This is an important point, because until recently, most discussions about class stopped at the doorstep of the working-classes[10] as if it was their concern only, with no exploration or account taken of the ways in which class impacts upon and forms the middle-classes, not only materially, but in terms of phantasy structures and defences.

It is usual in work which uses ideas from psychoanalysis to prioritise an interpretation of 'projection' as wanting to literally eject those feelings which are unbearable onto the 'other'. But what is less highlighted is the extent to which, while we may desperately want to banish these troublesome aspects of our own

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[10] Sociological interest in the lives of the middle-classes is growing. Examples include Power et al (2003), Lucey and Reay (2000b); Butler and Savage (1995a and b), Waquant (1991), Ehrenreich (1990), Walkerdine and Lucey (1989).

psyches, we are also deeply attached to them (Lucey and Reay 2000b). One of the arguments of this thesis is that bourgeois child-rearing practices are premised on ideas about the production of the 'rational subject' whereby middle-class children are required to make intellectual responses to emotional situations. In this way 'rationality' becomes a potent defence; a way in which irrational emotions can be 'mastered' and made safe (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989). These kinds of family practices are designed to encourage the development of an autonomous, self-sufficient and self-regulating subject who is able to exert control over difficult feelings. In Chapters Four, Five and Six I develop this point with particular reference to the educational performance of some of the middle-class and working-class young women. Perhaps it is the case that although middle-class subjectivity is premised on rationality, irrationality, even while it is projected onto others, must be kept close at hand (Lucey and Reay 2000b). Stallybrass and White (1986) argue that:

> there is a mobile, conflictual fusion of power, fear and desire in the constitution of subjectivity: a psychological dependence upon precisely those Others which are being rigorously opposed and excluded at the social level. It is for this reason that what is socially peripheral is so frequently symbolically central. (p 5)

Perhaps, as Walkerdine states, 'un-splitting' things, integrating them, considering them to be part of each other would 'muddy the political water too much' (Walkerdine 1995:18). Focusing on psychic practices does not mean an abandonment of the idea of collectivities, of politics or of social change.

> It does however mean a commitment to engage with and understand more effectively the kinds of defences and resistances which operate to maintain social stasis. Certainly a project of psychic integration as part of a political project would mean considering, taking in even, aspects of the self (envy, greed, empathy, fear) which up until now have needed to be expelled in order to sustain political allegiance. It is this kind of splitting which is central to the maintenance of the rational order of society in which different classes come to internalise their 'rightful' place. (Lucey and Reay 2000b: 153)

Conclusion

Psychoanalysis is a story, and a way of telling stories. It allows us to go beyond 'face value' accounts; to take into our account what is not said, what is absent. Or, perhaps even more importantly, it is a way of addressing the irrational, the ambiguous and the inconsistent in our stories and in what cannot be made sense of; either in our own minds or in existing academic, theoretical accounts. As Philips comments 'psychoanalysis can give us new lines on things that matter to us (like kissing, tickling and being bored)' (Philips 1993: 3).

Part of the project of second wave feminism was to achieve equal opportunities for girls in education. For the middle-class girls that took part in *Project 4:21*, this aim has certainly been achieved and their educational performance is outstanding. But despite celebratory discourses, or popular discourses which proclaim that girls like these can now 'have it all', there is little currently available in educational theory to get to grips with the levels of anxiety amongst the middle-class girls about that very performance. How can this be when they are the ones who are doing so well? Why isn't their success making them happy? Conversely, how is that the working-class girls who took part and who were doing well at school could not follow anything like the straightforward paths of the middle-class girls? Why did they find it so hard to recognise and sustain high performance when they clearly were not lacking in ability? It seems undeniable that learning and educational success or failure is not a matter of structure alone, or of good practice, doing the right things, but that unconscious processes are an immense force to be reckoned with. These are all questions that will be addressed through the lens of psychoanalytically informed post-structuralism throughout the following chapters.

In the next chapter I detail the development and employment of a psychosocial method whereby psychoanalytic concepts are brought to the analysis and interpretation of qualitative interview data. Using examples from the data I explore the methodological and epistemological implications and practicalities of viewing the research process through a psychosocial perspective.

CHAPTER TWO
DEVELOPING A PSYCHOSOCIAL METHOD

Introduction

This chapter is in two parts. The first section describes in full the longitudinal qualitative study, *Project 4:21 Transitions to Womanhood*, which is the empirical base for this thesis. It gives details of funding, stated aims and objectives. Issues of sampling, accident and design in the building of the study, data collection, data handling and data analysis are considered.

In the second part of the chapter I describe the psychosocial approach that I have developed and used as the analytic method in this thesis. I explore the methodological and epistemological implications and practicalities of viewing the research process through a psychosocial perspective. Two themes run through this section: the epistemological importance of researcher-subjectivity in the research process, and the significance of unconscious dimensions of research encounters. I begin by reviewing work in which I began to use my own subjectivity as a way of thinking about and casting an alternative light on issues of difference in research accounts. I then briefly revisit some of the concepts developed within Freudian, Kleinian and the object relations schools of psychoanalysis that describe and analyse the ways in which difficult emotions are unconsciously defended against. Three examples taken from the data of *Project 4:21* demonstrate how these concepts have been incorporated into field practice. The 'three levels of analysis' developed and used as a tool to bring together social and psychic dimensions in an analysis that is 'psychosocial' is described in detail through these examples.

PART ONE: DESCRIPTION OF *PROJECT 4:21 TRANSITIONS TO WOMANHOOD*

The sample for this longitudinal study consisted of two groups of girls. Group A was composed of a larger group of thirty girls born in 1972/3 and stratified by social class. Using the Registrar Generals' classification of that time fifteen of

the families were classified as middle-class and fifteen as working-class. Originally, this sample was constructed in pairs of girls that attended the same nursery school, but who were of different social classes i.e. there were fifteen sets of middle-class/working-class pairs. Twenty nine of the girls were white and one was mixed race[1]. This group of thirty girls (Group A) were studied when they were four, ten and twenty-one years old. Data was first collected when they were four years old for a study conducted by Barbara Tizard and Martin Hughes (1984). The girls were followed-up at school when they were ten years old, by myself and Valerie Walkerdine, for a study on girls, social class and mathematics. By this time, only two of the original working-class/middle-class pairs was unbroken and attended the same primary school.

Group B was a second, smaller group of eight girls that were also included as part of the longitudinal study. These girls, born in 1978, had initially formed the basis of a study about girls at home and at school when they were six years old (Walkerdine 1986, 1997) as well as a study of young girls and popular culture (Walkerdine 1997). All eight of the girls were from the same primary school. They were a mixed class and ethnicity group, containing four white working-class girls and one white middle-class girl, one black African-Caribbean working-class girl, one Indian middle-class girl and one working-class girl whose mother was white British and father was Maltese[2].

Both groups of girls were followed up in 1993 when they were twenty-one and sixteen years old respectively and took part in the last phase of the project (Walkerdine et al 2001; Lucey et al 2003a, 2003b). At this time two African-Caribbean, one mixed race (African-Caribbean father and white British mother), two Indian and one Pakistani twenty-one year olds, also of varying social class were also recruited to join the study. This phase of the research was supported by funds from the Economic and Social Research Council, Goldsmiths' College and Channel Four Television.

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[1] I have chosen to use the term 'mixed race' to describe young women in the sample who had one African-Caribbean parent and one white parent. This is an area of much debate (see for example, Parker and Song 2001), and one that is discussed fully in Chapter Five.

[2] See Appendix 2 for a table summarising the details of the sample.

The aims of this study were:

- Completion of the final phase of *Project 4:21*.
- Provision of a detailed analysis of the relation between early years, educational success and failure, in terms of employment and education for this group of young women.
- Examination of class differences in the life trajectories of these working-class and middle class young women.
- Theorisation of the relation between class, gender, aspiration and identity, attempting to understand why some young women succeed and others fail and what success and failure means to them, together with an examination of the relation between school, work, leisure and popular culture in the formation of the young women's identities.
- The development of an innovative methodology through the use of video diaries[3].

Phases of the study

Data was collected mostly using standard methods for gathering qualitative data. These included semi-structured interviews (Denzin 1978; Denzin and Lincoln 1994) and ethnographic observations that were sometimes audio recorded, in the primary school classroom and at home (Goetz and LeCompte 1984; Woods 1986; Walford 1991; Cohen and Manion 1994). Quantitative data was comprised of standardised maths tests for the 10 year olds (Muijs 2004).

1. Group A – Phase One: the four year olds at home and at school.

When Group A (n=30) were four years old, home and nursery school recordings of between two and four hours each, were made with the aid of a radio microphone (Goetz and LeCompte 1984). Data was collected by the Tizard and Hughes research team (Tizard and Hughes 1994). Observational notes were

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[3] A full explication of the method and analysis of the video diaries is not given here because it does not form part of the empirical base on which this thesis is built. For a description of how they were used as part of the data collection method in *Project 4:21* see Lucey (1999).

taken to augment the recordings and these were transcribed alongside the taped sessions.

2. Group A - Phase Two: the ten year olds at school

When the same thirty girls were ten years old they were followed up at primary school. Each girl was interviewed individually and asked to do a ranking exercise whereby they positioned and gave their opinions about themselves, their classmates and their family members in terms of how 'good' they thought they were at mathematics (Woods 1986; Fielding 1993). This was a way of encouraging the girls to articulate their observations, experiences and feelings about themselves in relation to the people who were important and 'active' in their social and emotional world (Schratz 1993). Their teachers were also interviewed and asked to do the same exercise. Standardised mathematics tests were administered to each pupil in the girls year (Muijs 2004).

3. Group B - Phase Three: the six year olds

Group B (n=8) were recorded at home and at primary school on three separate occasions in 1984, using a radio microphone with observer's notes augmenting the taped sessions (Cohen and Manion 1994). Recordings lasted between one and a half and three hours. The girls were interviewed, as were their parents and teachers, and all interviews were semi-structured (Denzin 1978; Denzin and Lincoln 1994). The girls' interviews focused on how well they thought they were doing in school, with a ranking exercise to facilitate the discussion (Woods 1986). Parent's interviews centred around how they felt about their daughter's education – progress, achievement, teaching etc. – and their hopes and fears for her future. Teacher's interviews included a ranking exercise of the pupils in their class, their own feelings about being teachers and any identifications with particular pupils.

4. Group A and B - Phase Four: sixteen and twenty-one year olds

Both groups of girls were followed up in 1994 when the larger group were twenty-one and the smaller group sixteen years old. They were all interviewed twice (one year apart) and their parents once. They also made a 'video diary' (Lucey 1999). The interviews were in-depth, and semi-structured in the sense

that there were a range of topics that were to be raised with each young woman, even though individual subjects' narratives were followed in an individual way (Robson 2002).

I worked as a Research Assistant in the Girls and Mathematics Research Unit[4] between 1984 – 1987, a post that was funded variously by the Leverhulme Trust, the ESRC and London University, and worked on data collected in Phases One, Two and Three. This included a re-analysis of the Group A, Phase One and Phase Two data (when that group were four and ten years old) to look at the links between home and school in the learning of mathematics, the connections between early years socialisation and later educational achievement in maths with specific reference to gender and social class (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989; Walkerdine with The Girls and Mathematics Unit 1989). I also analysed the home and school recordings of Group B – Phase Three for a study of young girls, education and popular culture. So it was with this background that I came to interview the young women and their families in Phase Four. These took the form of semi-structured interviews, with questions that each young woman was asked, but ensuring that there was space in the interview for the interviewee to make free associations (Hollway and Jefferson 2000). Each young woman was interviewed twice, one year apart and the parents were also interviewed, separately where possible. Most of the interviews lasted between two and three hours and were audio recorded. The interviews were based on a checklist of open-ended questions. After making a preliminary analysis of the first interviews and the video diaries (Lucey 1999), questions for the second interviews were devised. The aim here was to explore some of the themes that had come up in the first interviews and in the video diaries as well as absences that it was felt would be helpful to hear about in order to build up each girl's narrative.

The interview and observation data set for all four phases of the study consisted of approximately 194 hours of recorded observations and 179 interviews, the

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[4] Based at the Institute of Education, London University.

vast majority of them over 2 hours long (see Appendix 1 for a full breakdown of data).

Data gathering

Group A - Phase One

Data for Group A-Phase One was collected by researchers unknown to me. The approach taken by those doing the home and school recordings was to maintain distance between themselves and the research participants. This was maintained even though the researcher was extremely conspicuous - more often than not s/he was sitting in the same room as the child and her mother (or in her classroom at school), with bulky recording equipment, wearing large earphones and writing notes. Furthermore, the child had to wear a special dress with a radio microphone sewn in. This meant that when the four year old girls expressed interest in the researcher, what she was writing, the recording equipment and so on, the researcher typically ignored her. Interactions with adults (mothers and teachers) were also kept to a minimum. The researcher made descriptive notes on what was happening in the scene s/he was observing, designed to help the listener of the tapes make sense of the talk of the children, mothers and teachers. These notes were not extensive. They did not carry more 'subjective' impressions of the observations, or any initial interpretation or analysis of events.

Group A - Phase Two and Group B – Phase Three

The data for these Phases was collected by another researcher who was known to me. This researcher was less concerned to maintain an 'objective' distance between herself and those being interviewed or audio-recorded. Fieldnotes were made during and after each visit to the schools in both Phases. Interviews were semi-structured and had an informal tone. When conducting home and school recordings on Group B – Phase Three, the researcher did engage with children, parents and teachers when their talk was directed to her, although she did not initiate it. Extensive notes were made during and after home recordings. These included descriptions of events observed to help the listener make sense of what was happening in the recording. Notes written after the recordings and

after interviews often contained information that participants had given off-tape. They frequently included the researcher's subjective impression of the researcher encounter, and sometimes analytical 'hunches' and tentative interpretations.

Groups A and B – Phase Four

I collected over half of the data for Groups A and B of Phase Four. Extensive notes were written immediately after each interview. These notes not only recorded what were felt to be the most pertinent points of the interview, but also feelings about the interview itself, its setting and some of the absences - of things that were not said, or avoided by the interviewee. Though it was important to be as alive to these aspects of the interview at the time, it was my contention that because the researcher is as unconsciously engaged in the interview as the subject, much of this emotional material may be inaccessible to her at the time: it is through later listenings and readings of the interview, not only by the interviewer herself but other members of the research team that the layered nature of the encounter is made more visible. This is explored in detail in the following sections.

Data handling

Data was organised and handled in very similar ways across all Phases. Taped interviews and home and school recordings were fully transcribed. In Phases One, Two and Three, conducted in the mid 1980s, computers were only just beginning to appear as ordinary pieces of office equipment, and computer technology was extremely limited compared to the present time. Analysis began with transcripts of data being read whilst simultaneously listening to the audio-recording of the interview or home or school observation. Initial codes were generated from the first reading of the data. Data was re-read and codes refined and further codes raised (Strauss and Corbin 1990). This is familiar as an analytic strategy widely used by qualitative researchers today; however, in the 1980s phases of the study, data was coded by hand, with extracts from the data written on small cards which were then filed in a systematic way. Often, data that could be multiply coded was written out on two sets of cards so that it could

be filed in different places. In Phase Four, the main principles of a grounded analysis were adhered to but some of the manual parts of this process were now carried out electronically. Interviews could now be stored on computers to form a database. The interviews were read and initially coded by researchers, who then entered the codes as data into a software package for qualitative data analysis, Nudist (Gahan and Hannibal 1998). This was extremely helpful in organising the large data set of Phase Four and facilitated a wide-ranging analysis of major emergent issues. Data for each participant from previous phases of the study was re-examined, as were all notes and published and unpublished analyses of that data. Analysis proceeded from the particular to the general through detailed and repeated readings of transcripts (Miles and Huberman 1994).

Central to the mode of data analysis was regular, in-depth project-team discussions of particular 'cases'. Here, the production of interpretation and meaning was examined, not as an inter-interpreter agreement or triangulation, but in a way which built deliberately upon differences in interpretation in order to explore the place of transference and unconscious processes in the making of meaning. The analytic method is discussed in more detail in Part Two of this chapter.

Strengths and limitations of the sample

Using the sample from another research team can also present problems and there are a number of issues relating to the construction of the original Group A, four year old sample that it is pertinent to discuss here. Quite specific criteria were used to select the girls and their families by the Tizard and Hughes team. Mothers who worked full-time were not included as it was felt that this would have made it too difficult to observe the girls at home. Families which were felt to be 'atypical', such as non-English speaking, single parent, black families and families with more than three children were also excluded (Tizard and Hughes 1984: 24-25). This produced a homogeneous sample in terms of family formation, ethnicity and culture and presented white, nuclear middle-class and working-class families, where husbands worked full-time and wives' main

occupation was looking after the children, as highly normalised. In fact, the demographic picture for 1970s Britain reveals that the population was much more diverse than the sample suggests (Office for National Statistics 1978).

Social Class

The conventional indicator of social class for households, used widely at that time, was the occupation of the husband in married households and the male partner in unmarried ones. This was categorised using the Registrar General's Scheme which was the official class scheme of the UK up until the late 1990s, when it was replaced by a modified version of the Goldthorpe scheme (Roberts 2001). The Registrar General's scheme had six main classifications: classes I and II consisted of higher and lower-level professionals, managers and administrative employees; IIIa comprised lower-level white-collar workers; IIIb, IV and V comprised skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled manual grades. The middle-class fathers came from RG class I and II (for example lawyer, dentist, teacher) and the working-class fathers from RG IV and V (for example window cleaner, driver, unskilled and semi-skilled workers).

Within this system of classification social class is reduced to the occupational category of the male 'head of household', which, as was hotly debated at that time, ignores the problematic nature of women's status (Beechey 1979, 1983; Garnsey 1982; Phillips 1987). Mothers' level of education was taken into account in the choosing of the families so that only middle-class women who had at least qualified to enter college or university were included – in fact, most of the middle-class mothers had degrees at this time and all had got degrees by the time their daughters were ten. All of the working-class women had left school at the minimum leaving age with no qualifications. Although not made explicit in the Tizard and Hughes account of the research, I would suggest that their inclusion of the educational background of the mother was connected to a strong trend in educational research, psycholinguistics and developmental psychology that made links between the preparation made in the home for later performance at school (Newson and Newson 1976; Piaget, see Gruber and Voneche 1977; Labov 1978;), a link that connected the educational level of mothers to how well their children did at school (Douglas 1964).

Because the sample was constructed within the top and bottom range of the Registrar General's classification, two very separate family groups in terms of class were set up. Consequently, a group of degree-educated members of the 'new' (social worker, teacher) and 'old' (lawyer, doctor, diplomat) professions (Bernstein 1977), who owned their own properties, properties with gardens for the most part, some of whom employed cleaners and au pairs, were then compared to the working class group, who had no qualifications, were employed in unskilled or semi-skilled manual occupations, lived in rented council or private accommodation, did not have gardens and worked in unskilled occupations, for example as cleaners. In effect this meant that the sample was rather polarised and was missing fractions of the working-classes and middle-classes (Butler and Savage 1995b), the lower level white-collar and skilled manual workers (RG IIIa and IIIb), where there was potentially more room for social mobility and where perhaps the social class water was muddier. The implications for my study is that differences between the two groups may have been exaggerated because of the distance in their class position at the beginning of the research, and may therefore be an artefact of the sample. It is possible that had the sample carried a broader range of social class positions, some of the differences that I comment on may not have been so apparent to me, or indeed, so relevant to the arguments presented in this thesis. It has therefore, had an impact on the arguments put forward in this thesis. On the other hand, this thesis is concerned with shifts and movements in gendered and classed identities over the last twenty years: it could be that by observing two such precisely delineated social class groupings I have been able to gain more clarity on certain aspects of those changes and how they are differently played out amongst the working-class and middle-class families.

'Race' and Ethnicity

By far the biggest problem was the absence from the original four year old sample of the variables of 'race' and ethnicity, a problem of non-representation that was not addressed when the four year olds were ten and so was still there when they were followed up at twenty-one. At this stage an additional sample of six twenty-one year olds which included British African-Caribbean, British-Indian and British-Pakistani young women were recruited in an attempt to have a wider

representation of ethnicities within the sample. This sample was gathered through placing 'recruitment' advertisements in a range of popular black and Asian publications of the time, such as The Voice, Eastern Eye and the Asian Times. This was only a partial solution to the problem however, as their specific childhood histories had to be gleaned from contact with them at twenty-one, rather than throughout the process of their growing up. Nonetheless, having failed to do something about this before, the research team had to do something about it now, and live with this compromise solution.

Despite the methodological challenges posed in the construction of *Project 4:21*, it nevertheless represents an extraordinarily rich data set, collected over seventeen years. It is through this data-set, comprised of observations and in-depth interviews that it has been possible to chart some of the central social, emotional and historical processes of the girls' and their families' lives.

PART TWO: EARLY EXPLORATIONS IN METHODOLOGY

Historical Context

The development of my ideas about qualitative research methods and epistemology began in the 1980s when feminist researchers and writers in Britain, Europe and the United States were beginning to challenge some of the orthodoxies of positivist social science and to argue for an account of social science methodology that exposed the less objective dimensions of research encounters. There was not one feminist position on research, rather an up-swelling of multi-faceted debate that continues to this day[5]. Some feminists were drawing on post-structuralist conceptualisations of power in order to theorise how power differentials between researcher and researched, typically differentials of social class, gender and 'race', had profound implications for the production of knowledge through research (Stanley and Wise 1983; Stanley 1990; Lather 1991). Some feminist researchers and writers were refusing to hide behind the false objectivity of positivism, and much of this work had a

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[5] See for instance, Ribbens and Edwards (1998), Letherby (2003).

'subjective turn'. White working-class British academics, such as Glastonbury (1979) and Steedman (1986) were using their own experience to 'rewrite' the orthodoxy of contemporary sociological accounts of women and of the family, whilst in the US feminists such as Lorde (1984) and hooks (1992) were also using the first person to challenge 'malestream' accounts of black women's lives.

The psychosocial method that I put forward in this chapter and use throughout the thesis owes much to the work of these and many other feminist researchers. My own work as a researcher has also made a contribution to those debates and developments. In particular, the analysis of Phases One and Two of *Project 4:21*, written up in *Democracy in the Kitchen* was part of a growing feminist movement that struggled to create new territory on which to critically engage with conventional academic, popular and political discourses on the production of classed feminine identities through the regulation of mothering practices and the socialisation of girls. It is to that phase of the study and that publication that I turn to now in a discussion of the place of researcher subjectivity in a psychosocial methodology.

Beginning to work with researcher subjectivity

As an undergraduate sociology student I had been struck by the disciplines' chronic fascination with working-class lives and the relative absence of research on middle-class life (Goldthorpe and Lockwood 1968; Willis 1977; Pollert 1981). Nobody seemed to be able to tell me why the lives of the middle-classes, who were deeply interesting to me as a child and an adult, were not worthy of the same kind of scrutiny that working-class people were. Furthermore, even though I came from exactly the kind of working-class family that was the object of sociological research in the fields of education, health, the family, kinship, labour relations and, of course, social class and political affiliation, I was beginning to realise that I rarely recognised myself, my family, or any of the working-class men, women and children that I knew and grew up with, in those accounts. Academic writers from working-class backgrounds such as Seabrook (1982) and Hoggart (1959) gave me hardly anything to recognise either, except

the authors' contempt for where they had come from (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989).

Educational research since the Education Act of 1944 was primarily concerned with the continued school failure of the working-classes. In an era in which educational policy was shaped by principles of equality of opportunity for all, the continued underachievement of the majority of working-class children and young people remained a puzzle (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989). Strong links were consistently made between educational success and failure and the family (Douglas 1964; Halsey et al 1980). However, this was at the time, and remains to this day, a set of discourses in which some working-class practices were and are implicitly or explicitly set alongside some middle-class practices. This has its consequences: as working-class children are as overwhelmingly unsuccessful in education as middle-class children are successful, it is inevitable that the practices of working-class families have implicitly been seen, at best as lacking that which ensures middle-class educational success, at worst as evidence of pathological tendencies when compared with 'normal' middle-class practices (see Chapter Three). The 'normality' of middle-class practices was also reinforced by the empirical fact that, at that time, professional middle-class backgrounds typified all but a very few social scientists. This was to emerge as a key issue in my early work in which I moved towards creating a different discourse for reading both working-class and middle-class families than that which was usual (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989). Because of my working-class background, those everyday practices which in traditional discourses tended to be seen as evidence of a 'lack' or 'pathology' of some sort, were viewed by me as 'normal' and 'understandable', while the fact that many of the middle-class family practices seemed unusual, odd and inexplicable to me allowed me to ask questions which were not generally posed. This process of 'making strange' (Bourdieu 1984; Smith 1988) things which on the surface and often within popular and/or traditional discourses are 'taken for granted', and therefore do not seem to require an explanation, has continued to be a characteristic of my approach to data collection and analysis throughout my research to date (Walkerdine et al 2001). The development of this approach will be explored more fully in the course of this chapter, but now I will return to the first phase of

Project 4:21 and the re-analysis of the four year olds' data in order to demonstrate how I first began to use my own subjectivity in the research process.

This data originally came from a study by Barbara Tizard and Martin Hughes (1984) in which the authors' aim was to explore the relation between home and school, by examining the roles of mothers and nursery school teachers in supporting children's linguistic and cognitive development. They came to the conclusion that many mothers were more 'sensitive' to the needs of young children than teachers and supported a position in accord with that taken by the sociolinguist William Labov in the 1970s (Labov 1978), that working-class families were 'equal but different'. A case study of one working-class girl, Donna and her mother, was used to exemplify their assertion that working-class child-rearing practices are not deficient, merely different. In the chapter entitled 'An afternoon with Donna and her mother' the reader is assured that although the pair have rows and get on each other's nerves, this, and other working-class homes like it, provide a rich 'educational environment' where 'the potential for learning, especially social learning…is considerable' (Tizard and Hughes 1984: 92).

It was on reading their account of this mother-daughter pair that I felt that I had a very different story to tell about both the working-class and middle-class mothers and daughters. Donna and her mother were singled out for scrutiny in order to convince the reader that although Donna's mother was authoritarian and they were argumentative and fractious together, that nevertheless something good was going on between them – we simply needed help to recognise this. But this assertion of 'equal but different' seemed uneasy to me precisely because it was so laboured. In most of the book, concepts and processes that the authors referred to as engendering and supporting learning, were illustrated through numerous examples from the middle-class mothers and daughters. But in order to see the same positive interactions and processes occurring in working-class mother-child dyads, it seemed we had to look very hard indeed – we had to spend a whole afternoon there. None of the 'ordinary'

middle-class afternoons are singled out for such scrutiny (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989:7).

Having read the transcript itself it was hard to know why *this* afternoon was chosen for discussion, when it seemed like many afternoons I had spent with my mother, completely recognisable and unremarkable. This alerted me to the possibility that what was being presented as an 'objective' reading of mothers and daughters might be profoundly subjective, partly based on the class background and experience of the researchers and writers. Across the recordings of afternoons with working-class mothers and daughters I experienced a similar, unproblematic recognition of the conversations, the activities, the conflicts, games, housework, mealtimes that went on in those homes. This was in stark contrast to my feelings which emerged on reading the transcripts of the middle-class mothers and daughters.

For me, reading the middle-class transcripts was like stepping into a world of routine and unproblematic privilege. All the afternoons began with 'lunch'. It may seem trivial but the food in the middle-class homes was one source of irritation for me. There was more often than not a bowl of fruit and a choice of meals. The working-class homes did not have fruit or a choice of meals. It made them seem rigid by comparison, but they were also poor. But more than this, middle-class homes had more space and a different organisation of space, like the availability of playrooms (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989: 8).

What was ordinary in the middle-class homes provoked envy, contempt and anger in me. It was impossible for me to see these women as oppressed in any way. It was only when Diana Watson, a co-researcher and herself a middle-class mother, looked at the transcripts, that something else was revealed to me – something that was obscured by my own envy. For Diana brought to light the weight of the ways in which the middle-class mothers had to make every minute of the day into a pedagogy; the ways in which they had to be perfect mothers, always calm, patient and available to their children, so that they actually salvaged less time for themselves than the working-class women were able to do.

This kind of reflection on the micro-dynamics of social class, although not fitting easily into positivist ideas of what constitutes 'objective' research, has remained central to my development as a feminist social scientist. I have been concerned to work out ways in which to hold on to the analytical power of my own subjective feelings during the research process, but in a less raw way than is evident in *Democracy in the Kitchen*. There have been other developments in my thinking and practice about the micro-dynamics of class since then. The move towards using the insights that I have into my own emotional and social processes in order to cast some light of understanding and explanation on the emotional and social processes of others has informed the psychosocial approach in this thesis. The idea of 'others' and of 'difference' is important here (Fanon 1969; Donald and Rattansi 1992; Reay 1996). The strong feelings of recognition I experienced on reading the transcripts of the working-class four year olds in some ways enabled me to deny the very real differences that existed between me and the working-class mothers and daughters. Similarly, the difference and otherness that I felt in relation to the middle-class girls and their mothers did not allow me to explore the ways in which some aspects of my experience was *similar* to theirs – a fact that I was not always comfortable with. Ongoing reflection on my own hybrid class subjectivity and a growing familiarity and engagement with theoretical frameworks that could help me to understand psychodynamic processes has led to a more considered and rigorous examination of my own internal processes and their place in the research process. Most importantly, this has led to the development of a methodological and epistemological framework in which *difference* can play a full part. This approach was taken forward considerably in Phase Four of *Project 4:21*.

This is best illustrated through an example. The emotion that was often initially evoked in me when listening to the middle-class girls' data was envy. Through close examination of these feelings I began to appreciate how contentious that envy was for me. What emerged was the extent to which these feelings were an expression of my own fears and fantasies that arose in relation to being successful. I began to realise that I experienced considerable guilt at doing better at school, earning more money and having more autonomy and status at

work than nearly everyone in my immediate family[6]. I also began to understand how very sensitive I was to any comment or action that I could interpret as an expression of their envy towards me. This dawning insight helped me to use envy as a tool in which to examine the psychic aspects of the lives of the middle-class girls. I began to appreciate how for them, as for me, living with privilege has its own cost as well as rewards: defending themselves against the envy of others is one of the psychic processes through which their classed and gendered subjectivity is formed (Walkerdine et al 2001: 84).

In the following sections I describe in detail the development of a 'psychosocial method' used in this thesis for the analysis of data in the last phase of *Project 4:21*.

PART THREE: A PSYCHOSOCIAL APPROACH

> the most persuasive and rounded stories are psychosocial. They move between the intimate, local and particular and the wider culture and institutions. We need more than sociology to develop these accounts…
> (Froggett 2002: 32)

Feminist researchers have been committed to unravelling some of the myths contained in the scientific method and to debate the more visceral processes of doing research, interpreting data and producing knowledge (Stanley 1990; Ribbens and Edwards 1998). All of the epistemological and methodological dilemmas that feminists have rightly revealed in researching people's lives arose powerfully in Project 4: 21. In this part of the chapter, I discuss how I approached the messy and intractable issues of objectivity and reflexivity, fiction, fantasy (and phantasy) and the production of knowledge in social research.

There are five basic principles underpinning the psychosocial approach that I am proposing. Firstly, that there are clear, though complex connections

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[6] This is somewhat ironic in an academic context; contract researchers do not enjoy high status, equal employment contracts or any job security within higher education institutions (Reay 2000).

between states of mind and individual, social, institutional and political life. This perspective emphasises the dynamic, relational nature of psychic and social life. Secondly, in order to map those connections, a psychosocial approach brings concepts together that can begin to take some account of the *interior* processes of the human mind (to look at individual and group emotions) with those that relate to the *exterior*, public arenas of the social world (to examine structure and power). Thirdly, this approach assumes that *unconscious* as well as conscious processes come to bear on the everyday practices that make up personal lives and shape social policy. Fourthly, this perspective maintains that anxiety, and the strategies developed to defend against the difficult feelings that anxiety provokes, play an important part in the construction of private, social and institutional lives. And lastly, that there are aspects of our perception and experience that are deeply irrational. The privileging of rationality and reason in much social science research denies important aspects of human experience.

Research in the social sciences is often premised on the notion of a rational, calculating subject. In contrast, a psychosocial approach posits a subject whose actions, behaviours and biographies are not solely determined by conscious will, agency or intent (or indeed the lack of these things). The subject of my discourse is altogether more irrational, anxious and 'defended' (Hollway and Jefferson 1997). Following Freud and many others this approach embraces the idea that there are hidden aspects of human mental and emotional life which are at play at the dynamic level of the unconscious[7]. These unconscious processes, while remaining hidden, nevertheless profoundly influence and are intertwined with more conscious processes; not only individual and social ones, but the very structures of collective human life - material and ideological institutions such as the state, education, the family and work; the organisation of biological processes such as motherhood; the lived experiences of class, 'race', femininity (Walkerdine et al 2001: 84).

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[7] There is only room here to mention a very few. Of course there are those psychoanalysts who developed Freud's work in numerous directions, such as Klein (1952), Winnicott (1957), Bion (1962), Sayers (1995) and those who have taken up a range of psychoanalytic concepts, including that of the unconscious to theorise political and institutional life e.g. Rustin (2001), Froggett (2002).

An important premise for this method is that unconscious defence mechanisms such as projection, introjection and transference are all *relational* and *dynamic*. That is, that all parties involved in the research encounter are involved in this relational dynamic – there is no such thing as 'objectivity' in the way that it is usually understood within a positivist framework. Despite violating any requirements of neutral observation (Kvale 1999), they will inevitably arise in the research interview just as powerfully as in any other interaction, and not only for the interviewee. This leads me onto the next part of my discussion and argument, which is, that in order to attempt to examine other people's unconscious processes, you must be willing and able to engage with your own.

Reflexivity

It is certainly not new for 'reflexivity' to be stressed in feminist research, and this is usually taken to mean reflecting upon, examining critically and exploring analytically the nature of the research process and its relationship to the data that is constructed by the process (Fonow and Cook 1991; Ribbens and Edwards 1998). Self-reflexivity has for some feminist researchers been an important part of the process of making visible the power of the researcher to interpret, represent and produce knowledge from the voices of her research subjects (Reay 1996; Stanley 1990). And yet, like most attempts to produce a solution, this strategy brings its own problems, not least of which is the risk of making the researcher's voice more central than that of the research subject (Wolf 1996).

Aware of the potential dangers, I nevertheless wanted to be able to use my own subjectivity in the research process, to regard it less as an intrusion than as a valuable aspect of research data. But there are some important distinctions which should be stressed between the kind of reflexivity that qualitative researchers often advocate and what I am proposing. Adding the researcher's voice in qualitative research is sometimes viewed as a way to fill-in some of the absences which 'difference' produces in order to construct a more complete ethnographic picture (Reay 1996). It is the case that the psychosocial approach I use in this thesis is, alongside most qualitative approaches, infused with a

realism, searching for and claiming an authenticity which purports to represent individual and social experiences as they 'really' are. However, when attempting to take account of unconscious processes which are set in motion by intra-psychic anxieties and phantasies, notions of what constitutes the 'real' are seriously challenged. As Cohen argues 'the relation between the real and the imaginary is not fixed, but tactically determined. By the same token the imaginary is not a distorted reflection of the real, nor is the real simply a site for a projection of fantasy. We are always dealing with a process of *double inscription* whose articulation varies according to a range of social circumstances' (1999: 11).

This kind of approach, though it does require a willingness on the part of the researcher to look inward, is not a turning away from an engagement with the social world (May 1998), but rather an attempt to take account and make sense of that which tends to be denied or refused in more traditional researcher's and participants' rational accounts of the social world and linear accounts of history, including the history of the working and middle-classes (e.g. Thompson 1968). For instance, sociological accounts which assert the death of class because of the lack of evidence of 'class consciousness' amongst the working-classes are silent on the overwhelming evidence of the 'unconscious' and subjective aspects of social class (Gorz 1982); of the kinds of identifications, 'dis-identifications' (Skeggs 1997a), disavowals and desires that go towards the blurring and the breaching of contemporary class boundaries and the persistent reproduction of class difference.

Using psychoanalytic concepts

The use of psychoanalytic concepts to theorise social phenomena and processes is growing in a number of disciplines. While the overwhelming majority of educational research is concerned with conscious processes, there is a growing and significant body of empirical work which is concerned to explore individual and institutional patterns of investment and disavowal which enter in the formation of pedagogic identities (Britzman 1995; Shaw 1995; Pitt 1998; Raphael Reed 1999). Some oral historians have combined the

techniques of life story research with insights from family therapy in order to explore the 'mixture of conscious and unconscious models, myths and material inheritance' (Bertaux and Thompson 1993: 15) which combine to shape individual and family narratives (Ginzburg 1990). In the field of urban sociology and cultural geography, researchers and writers are drawing, in particular, on the work of the object relations theorists in order to explore the relationship between subjectivity, society and space (Pajaczkowska and Young 1992; Rose 1993; Pile 1996; Aitken 1998; Lucey and Reay 2000a, 2000b). In psychology, a number of researchers are using psychoanalytic concepts to expand their analysis (for example see, Walkerdine 1996; Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman 2002).

However, with notably few exceptions (e.g. Kvale 1999; Hollway and Jefferson 2000; Clarke 2002) there is little sociological engagement with the intrapsychic dimensions of research methodologies. In the excellent volume *Psychoanalytic Aspects of Fieldwork* (1989), Jennifer Hunt examines the methodological implications of a psychoanalytic perspective for ethnographic fieldwork. She pays particular attention to the psychodynamic dimension of the research encounter, pointing to the issue of transference and counter-transference in fieldwork, by examining the projections of the subjects onto the researcher and vice versa. The notion that the researcher's conscious impressions and feelings about research encounters are important is characteristic of many qualitative approaches that emphasise reflexivity in the research process (May 1998; Coffey 1999). This is a valuable perspective. However, the argument that I am making about the centrality of the researcher's subjectivity goes beyond conscious processes, and asserts that there are unconscious, intra-psychic as well as inter-personal processes in research encounters that reflexivity alone cannot capture.

Using psychoanalytic techniques and theory in research involves using ideas that have been developed in the context of individual analysis and applied to something that is not taking place in the clinical context. I have worked on the premise that psychic mechanisms such as transference, projection, projective identification and denial (see below and Chapter One), arise in research

interviews as inevitably as in any other interaction (Hunt 1989; Kvale 1999). I regard my own subjectivity as a valuable aspect of the research process (Stanley 1990; Ribbens and Edwards 1998; Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002). However, the purpose of adding the researcher's voice was not to construct a more complete, more 'real' ethnographic picture, nor to diminish the 'distorting' effects of the researcher. Instead, tapping into the (often) irrational thoughts and feelings of the researcher about the research participant and the research encounter was viewed (through the concepts of transference, counter-transference, projection) as one of the most useful indicators of what might be going on for the subjects of the research. This was therefore a means of creating a richer view of the 'reality' I was setting out to capture. Viewing reality as the imbrication of both internal and external experience means that there is no simple or fixed correlation between 'imaginary' internal reality and 'real' external reality and thus experience is 'simultaneously social and psychological (psychosocial), like the warp and weft of a piece of cloth.' (Hollway and Jefferson 2000: 138).

It could be argued that keeping a notion of the unconscious and working with psychoanalytic concepts, albeit in a post-structuralist fashion, uses a mode of explanation which removes historicity from the account. It is important to recognise the way in which psychoanalysis is being used and what psychoanalytic concepts are referred to. The central issue is to understand the way in which historically specific subject positions are held in place, structurally, socially and psychically. We can then begin to understand how the conflicts and contradictions between subject positions are experienced by the subject. My argument is that post-structuralist psychoanalysis potentially provides one way of understanding these issues by reference to concepts of the unconscious, anxiety, affect and psychic defences, and attempts to move away from any simple depth concept of a 'self' (Henriques et al 1998). I would argue that such an approach is compatible with narrative and discourse approaches to the understanding of subjectivity and considerably adds to them (Hollway and Jefferson 1997; Kvale 1999). Moreover, if we understand the research process itself as the construction of its own fiction, the storying into being of an account, then the researcher is both written into and writes that story (Steedman 1986).

In the following sections I outline the approach I have developed to take into account both the subjectivity of the researcher and the subjectivity of the participants as constituted through fiction, conscious fantasy and unconscious phantasy. This involves also thinking about some tricky issues, including power and surveillance in the research endeavour, the researcher's impossible desire to know what is *really* going on and the importance of understanding our own place in research. The discussion which follows forms an attempt to take seriously what it means to use psychoanalysis to understand the subjectivity of the researcher as it intersects with the participants and to argue for taking the unconscious phantasies and defences of participants seriously.

Psychosocial approach to interviewing

Interviews and observation were the two main methods of data collection in *Project 4:21*. The structure of the interviews drew on some of the principles of biographical research (Bertaux and Thompson 1993; Wengraf 2001). It was important that there was plenty of room for the interviewee to interpret questions in whatever ways felt important and appropriate for them. The opening question for the first interview was 'can you tell me what has been happening for you in the last ten years?' on the premise that the most significant events would usually be spoken about first (cf Sayers 1995). Giving the interviewees the freedom to say whatever came to mind has similarities to the psychoanalytic method of free association (Hollway and Jefferson 2000). This was an attempt to elicit a narrative that was structured according to both the conscious and the unconscious, in which the associations were defined by emotional motivations. Of course, the context in which the interview was set up, the expectations of the interviewee, the intersecting power-related dynamics of age, gender, 'race' and class (to name only the more obvious ones) were all likely to have a conscious and unconscious bearing on both what was said and what was left out. Importantly, the interviewer (myself or June Melody) tried to avoid 'why' questions on the grounds that they invite or encourage what Hollway and Jefferson (2000) describe as 'intellectualising-type defences'.

Extensive notes were written immediately after each interview. These notes not only recorded what were felt to be the most pertinent points of the interview, but also feelings about the interview itself, its setting and some of the 'absences' - of things that were not said, or avoided by the interviewee. Though it was important to be as alive to these aspects of the interview at the time, it is my contention that because the researcher was as unconsciously engaged in the interview as the subject, much of this material was inaccessible to her conscious mind at the time. It was through subsequent *critical* listenings and readings of the interview, and crucially, not only by the interviewer herself but other members of the research team that the layered nature of the encounters were made more visible. As I demonstrate in this chapter and further exemplify in Chapter Six, material that arose in the interview that the researcher found difficult was often rendered 'invisible' and 'unknowable' to her precisely because of the organisation of psychic processes that operate to keep difficult knowledge out of her conscious awareness.

Revisiting Some Key Psychoanalytic Concepts

In the following section I remind the reader of some of the concepts developed within varying strands of psychoanalysis that describe and enable analysis of the ways in which subjects defend themselves against difficult emotions. I then go on to demonstrate how these concepts were applied in the analysis of data in the context of *Project 4:21*.

The unconscious

Freud observed that when under hypnosis, his patients often spoke of memories or expressed wishes which, although they did not remember them when they were awake, nevertheless affected the moods, behaviour and even physical functioning of the patient. This led Freud to propose that part of the mind sets up a resistance to memories, impulses or desires that are felt by the conscious part of the personality to be bad, forbidden, or nonsensical. However, although they are repressed, they are not passive, but remain dynamic in the person's unconscious and continually strive for expression.

Freud used slips of the tongue (parapraxes) and dreams as evidence for the existence of the unconscious. In retrospect, it might have been helpful if I and my colleagues had recorded our own dreams in a systematic way, and analysed our own and the subjects' jokes and parapraxes, as they can provide important data in relation to unconscious phantasies in the research encounter that can ultimately have a bearing on the activity of both researcher and subject. Thoughts which mean something at a conscious level may have a much deeper, possibly different or hidden meaning at an unconscious level.

Anxiety

The notion of anxiety is a core concept of psychoanalysis. Conceptualisations of anxiety are also used in psychology and sociology, but differ in fundamental ways to a psychoanalytic understanding of anxiety. Within cognitive psychological traditions anxiety relates to a conscious process or state and can be quantified, rated, measured. Implicit in this work too is the idea that, once identified, anxiety is open to rational intervention. Classical sociological theory does not analyse the way anxiety circulates or the very powerful and material effectivities of that anxiety, though in recent times the importance of this has become recognised (Barbelet 1998). Within an educational context there is a significant literature concerned with examination anxiety (Eady 1999) and specific subject anxiety, such as maths (Newstead 1997), as well as work which is more generally concerned with 'stress' in children and adolescents and the management of that stress (Kyriacou and Butcher 1993). These understandings are in distinct opposition to psychoanalytic frameworks that take anxiety to be a constant feature of psychological life from early infancy and essential to the development of the personality (Freud 1936; Klein 1952). In this framework we are understood as evolving a series of psychic mechanisms of defence from earliest infancy in order to manage and cope with internal aggressive forces as well as external circumstances which give rise to great anxiety.

At a conscious level anxieties may be named and talked about. But at the level of the unconscious, rather than being 'out of sight out of mind', anxieties

continue to wield their considerable power beyond the rationalising influence of language. Object relations theorists such as Klein and Bion suggest that recognising that this as an *indwelling* fear makes sense of our constant striving but fundamental inability to correctly represent that fear (Klein 1952; Bion 1962). Hollway and Jefferson in their work on fear of crime note that 'The idea that anxiety leads to distortions and displacements demands a methodological strategy designed both to recognise and decode anxiety's many guises' (1997: 55).

Transference and counter-transference

Freud developed the concept of transference in his analysis of patients, when he theorised that 'our earliest relationships, real and fantasised, lay down inside us general tendencies, repeated in all our relationships with other people. We relate to others not just in terms of their 'reality' but in line with unconscious expectations and fantasies of our own' (Frosh 1987 :78). Conversely, counter-transference refers to the unconscious emotions produced in the analyst as a response to the specific characteristics of a patient. The unconscious reaction of the analyst to the patient is in dynamic interplay with the patient's transferential response to the analyst.

Because of the complex nature of fieldwork and the fact that it does not take place in a clinical setting, transference and counter-transference are not literally translatable to the interaction between the researcher and subject. However, interviewing a subject and other kinds of data gathering involves a dialogue that encompasses complex intra-psychic meanings from both the researcher and the subject - what psychoanalysts refer to as the 'inner world' of the researcher strongly influences the whole research process. The concepts of transference and counter-transference are useful tools for exploring the ways in which conscious and unconscious aspects of communication have a significant impact on the ways all participants perceive, interpret and influence the research dynamic.

In the setting of *Project 4:21*, for instance, interviewers were occasionally left feeling depressed after an interview even when the interviewees presented themselves as happy, cheerful and always positive. These emotions, experienced as those of the researcher rather than the research subject, can be extremely helpful in pointing to and understanding what might not (indeed, cannot) have been expressed by the subject. The fact that the researchers were all in personal analysis at the time of the research was helpful, as this gave them a heightened awareness of counter-transferences and intra-psychic personal conflicts.

Denial, Splitting and Projection

Central to our repertoire of psychic defences is denial (Klein 1946). Denial involves a refusal to recognise or appreciate the inner significance of an experience and, like other unconscious processes, is linked to the management and regulation of anxiety. Perhaps the most poignant illustration of the power of denial was with Anna, a white, working-class twenty-one year old, who became pregnant when she was fifteen years old, but who did not tell anyone about the pregnancy.

> No, no one knew. Because I just didn't show so no one knew. (...) And I just got on with my school work and I was working the same day as I had [her] so nothing really changed like that way, it stayed the same. (...) No one at all. I was so scared I just wanted it to go away, it just seemed like a big nightmare. I just wanted the whole lot to go away. (...) I went into labour, my waters broke and my friend got me to the hospital. My mum and dad were out shopping at the time and they got me there and an hour and a half later I'd had her.

Anna's conscious knowledge of her pregnancy was at odds with her desperate need to protect herself from the knowledge of the consequences of being pregnant and having a baby. And so she carried on as 'normal', as if a baby would never be born, quite literally until the day it was. In Chapter One I detailed how denial is closely connected to splitting. This is where we unconsciously split off material which is unacceptably anxiety-provoking, thereby defending ourselves against those aspects of internal reality (feelings) and, in Anna's case, external reality (her pregnancy).

What is stored in the unconscious is often painful and the individual has set up many defences to avoid feeling the pain. It is not surprising then that there is often resistance to accepting the existence of unconscious fears, phantasies and motivations. Also interviewees have parts of their lives that they understandably want to protect and hide from the prying gaze and questions of the interviewer, as well as from their own conscious awareness through defences such as denial, repression, rejection.

Projective identification

Projective Identification is one of the central concepts in Kleinian and object relations psychoanalytic theory (Klein 1952). This concept has been taken up by psychoanalysts concerned with group rather than individual processes (for example Bion 1962). It is through the mechanism of projective identification that one member of a family can become a kind of sponge for what can be seen as negative feelings of the other family members. It was frequently observed for example that when subjects had siblings, either the subject or her sibling would be described as bright where the other was viewed as less so, or that one might have been described as angry where the other was maybe never angry. Consequently, each person is described and related to as if one or other of these characteristics was a core part of their identity. In the case of Angela's family (for a full analysis see Chapter Six), this is often an identity created for the subject by their families in order for the families to evacuate their own feelings, which may stem from fear and feelings of inadequacy, onto another member. And as is so often the case, the identity of the person to whom these behaviours have been attributed also sees themselves as this person and lives out this projection. What is crucial here is that these feelings and behaviours are as connected to the cultural and social as well as to the unconscious and psychological dimensions of being.

Three Levels Of Analysis

In this section I will use a number of examples from *Project 4:21* to illustrate the ways in which I have attempted to apply and develop a framework of understanding that assists in making sense of the sometimes puzzling narratives of various family members and also to draw out the links between psychological, cultural and social processes that weave through conscious and unconscious individual and family processes.

Project 4:21 held a large amount of complex interview-based material, spanning seventeen years. It was imperative to construct an analytical framework through which to systematically organise and analyse the data according to the principles that shape a psychosocial approach. This framework is comprised of three levels of analysis. It is intended to be used, not as a rigid formula, but as a research tool that encourages the researcher to focus on things she might otherwise prefer to overlook or blur for reasons that the framework itself clarifies (Walkerdine et al 2001: 94).

Level One

At the first level, common to much qualitative analysis (Strauss and Corbin 1990; Silverman 1993) the focus was on the 'face value' of the subjects' story, a story containing events, characters and sub-plots. In this phase of analysis I aimed to get an overall sense of the 'shape' of the person's life in terms of life events, 'critical moments' (Thomson et all 2003) and significant people. To some extent this involved imposing a 'rational' framework on the interviewee's narrative, for instance, by 're-sorting' what may have been told un-chronologically, into a chronological order.

Level Two

The second level of analysis moved towards an initial exploration of the unconscious processes at play by paying attention to words, images and metaphors in the interview. Inconsistencies and contradictions, beginnings,

fade-outs, connections, absences and silences were noted in the narrative (Lucey et al 2003a: 96). Elements of what Brown and Gilligan refer to as the 'harmonics of relationship' (1992) were noted, such as the tone and register of the voice as well as any changes in them. Observations of this kind prompted the questions 'who is it that is speaking and who is being spoken to'? This was extremely important as it had implications regarding the identity of the subject and other family members and relationships within the family and with others outside of it.

At this second level of analysis I looked at the interview alongside the researcher's recorded emotional responses to the interview. Written up in fieldnotes immediately after each research encounter these were structured around a set of questions including: how did I feel during the interview? Empathic, excited, bored, irritated? Who did I represent for the subject, and who did they represent for me? In the language of psychoanalysis, what transferences took place? (Lucey et al 2003a: 97)

Level Three

At the third level of analysis the researcher attempted to go beyond her conscious thoughts and feelings (albeit irrational) and move towards an examination of her unconscious conflicts and phantasies about and during the research encounter. It was assumed that all inter-personal encounters are in part shaped by the intra-psychic dynamic between participants through defensive processes such as transference, projection etc. This level of analysis depended upon detailed discussion of cases in research team meetings, precisely because unconscious conflicts tend to be unconsciously defended against and therefore could not always be 'known' by the interviewer. It was assumed that through the different responses and interpretations of members of the research team to the data (transcribed interviews) and the fieldnotes of the interviewer, that the significance of the unconscious dynamics of the encounter can be brought to light.

This level of analysis is best illustrated through examples. I will give three examples: the first of a white working-class family, Mr and Mrs Green and their sixteen year old daughter Erica (Lucey et al 2003a); the second of my interview with Mr Cole, a white working-class man who was the father of sixteen year old Sharon; and the third the case-study of Angela, a white middle-class twenty-one year old and her younger sister Heather.

The working-class Green family

On hearing that the working-class Green family had, during the intervening years between the first and latest phases of the study, bought their council house in London, sold it for a profit and moved to the north of England where they now had their own business, I put in place a mental picture of a family who had taken advantage of a particular historical and political moment to modestly realise their dreams of social mobility (desires articulated by Mr and Mrs Green at previous stages of the study). This was far from the case! The Greens had, in fact, been extremely successful in the 1980s housing market and in their new business and were keen to show the fruits of their success: a large house with paddock and stable, their daughter's pony, two new cars with personalised number plates. They had 'made it' and this was the 'official' story that they wanted to be known and recorded.

My feelings towards the Greens were mixed. I genuinely liked the family as they showed me the kind of warmth and generosity that I recognised in my own family – a positive transference. My parents had also bought their council house, but, unlike the Greens, would not be moving off their estate (a significant fact that we are unable to explore here). But there were also negative transferences that were *not* recorded in fieldnotes and remained unconscious at this stage. In this example my request for Mr and Mrs Green to talk about the idea of their daughter Erica one day leaving home provoked some unconscious anxiety in them indicated by the difficulty they had in imagining it.

Helen: Just talking about Erica's independence, can you see her moving away from home and living independently. Sooner or later?

Mrs Green: No

Mr Green: I don't know. Maybe when she marries. I don't know, it depends.
Mrs Green: We've been told that we're not allowed to sell the house and when me Mum's gone Darren's going to have this side, because it's a bigger house and Erica's going to have that side, and we're going in an old peoples home (laughs).
Helen: One up the road? (laughs). (Mr & Mrs Green laugh).

Despite the laughter, this discussion was not only making Mr and Mrs Green anxious. It is at this point that my own unconscious anxieties got the better of me and forcibly made their presence known.

Mr Green: I can't see her moving away to work. Is that what you mean?
Helen: For any reason. I mean one of my fantasies when I was 16 was to get away as soon as possible and live in a bedsit.

Although consciously feeling 'connected' with the Greens on more than one level, their resistance to the idea of Erica leaving home provoked in me intense feelings of being trapped. This emotional response was rooted in my own teenage desires and fantasies of independence, excitement, and 'getting away' and my own parents' response, which was similar to that of the Greens. It is important to stress that I was *not consciously aware* of my own anxieties at the time and recorded nothing of this in my field-notes. My interjection, understandably, did nothing to alleviate the Green's anxieties and the conversation continued quite defensively on both parts until the topic changed (Lucey et al 2003a).

This example illuminates the third level of analysis, whereby the research team individually and collectively reflected on their responses to and interpretations of cases in an effort to shed light on what Parker (1995) calls 'unconscious to unconscious communication'. Integral to this level of analysis was the working premise that the researcher's experience of the intra-psychic dynamic of the research encounter could tell us something important about not only the researcher's but the subject's relationship to the wider social world. Crucially, this meant going beyond what the researcher herself recorded. This was neither a simple nor technical matter. of confession or self-revelation, but required a

willingness to consider sometimes extremely difficult feelings and experiences that were heavily defended at the level of the unconscious – feelings that were unwanted, denied and/or felt to belong to others. As will be explored, this approach can be just as deconstructive of the unconscious phantasies which bolster the narratives of the researcher.

It is certain that unconscious anxieties of both the researcher and subjects were powerfully at play and that in their dynamic relation, made most visible through both parties' defensive responses, something was revealed which may otherwise have remained hidden - and not just about the internal dynamics of the Green or the Lucey families. Across the data set, working-class families expressed far more worries about daughters moving away from home than did the middle-class families: keeping 'close' was an important trope in working-class subjectivity[8]. Even amongst the few working-class girls who went on to higher education, all but one stayed at or very close to home while they were at university. Of course some middle-class parents did feel tremendous sadness when their daughters left for university, but occupational and geographical mobility are centrally implicated in the constitution of professional subjectivities (Lucey and Reay 2000b; Savage et al 1992), and their comments in no way convey the sense of devastating loss contained in this leaving that was evident in working-class parents' accounts (Lucey et al 2003b: 145).

Mr Cole: the complexities of counter-transference

I now take the example of my interview with Mr Cole, a working-class father, to illustrate how an interviewer's defence mechanisms were able, not only to drive the research interview in a particular direction, but also to stop it in its tracks when material emerged that was too uncomfortable for her to deal with.

Mr Cole was so angry with his eldest son (his step-son) for stealing jewellery and money from Mrs Cole that he threw him out of the house. Mr Cole's feelings

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[8] See Walkerdine et al (2001) for a discussion of how keeping close to the family is an important aspect of working-class teenage motherhood.

of betrayal went deep, as did his reluctance to 'forgive' his step-son. He said 'you can trust a thief, but not a liar. As far as the family is concerned the boy doesn't exist'. Of course, the boy's existence was living proof for Mr Cole that his wife had not always been with him, something that intruded into the family dynamic. Treating him as if he did not exist may have been a relief for Mr Cole, defending against difficult emotions like jealousy that he would rather not have felt.

During the early part of the interview with Mr Cole I felt that I had to struggle to get any rapport with him. Indeed, my consistent impression of the whole interview, at the time and throughout subsequent case discussions was that Mr Cole resisted going into any detail with me about what had happened with this son. However, during one of the case discussions, it was noticed that at one point in the interview Mr Cole had asked me whether I had any brothers or sisters. This question proved to be a crucial moment in the interview, because it was clear that when I replied that I was one of eight children (he was one of seven) his attitude changed noticeably and he became much more forthcoming with information about his relationship with his step-son.

However, shortly after this point, I suddenly stopped Mr Cole in his tracks and changed the subject! How do we make sense of this interaction? It is important to note that establishing rapport in this particular interview was very important, as I had literally had the door shut in my face and when I was finally let in the house by Mrs Cole I was left standing in the hallway while they sat in the living room and ignored me. I felt extremely uncomfortable and was very pleased that he said anything at all at the beginning. I wanted to answer his questions and wanted him to be able to identify with and feel safe with me. Analysis of the transcript shows that it was his knowledge of me as coming from a large family that allowed him to project some of his own phantasies onto me and make me a 'safe' person to whom to reveal some of his history. Simultaneously however, events within my own family which resonated strongly with what Mr Cole was now telling me, meant that I actually didn't want to hear any more of this painful story and so changed the subject.

In this scenario what can be seen as counter-transference was the subsequent shift from not revealing things about myself and being an anonymous interviewer to the temporary loss of my identity as a researcher. What seemed to happen was that, having slipped into a temporary identification with the Cole family, I suddenly felt very uncomfortable and reacted by abruptly breaking the rapport. The fact that I did not want to continue the conversation suggests that counter-transference took place and this family represented my own family for me. It was difficult for me to keep the Cole and Lucey families separate. It is because it leapt over the boundary between me and 'them' that it became uncomfortable. In an attempt to move away from these difficult feelings and to hold onto my researcher role I changed the subject. This is a very good example of the way in which an interviewer is different from a therapist. Psychoanalytic psychotherapists are trained not to reveal any aspect of their personal life to a patient as this would interfere with the transference from analysand to analyst that is deemed crucial to the psychotherapeutic process.

Valerie Walkerdine had interviewed the Cole family and carried out home observations when Sharon, their daughter, was six years old. She had written about the issues around surveillance and intrusion from outside that were current for the Cole family at that time (Walkerdine 1986). I felt strongly that those issues remained alive for the family ten years later when I visited them and that I was regarded as an unwelcome, nosey intruder (somewhere between a social worker and a policewoman) until I had 'proven' myself otherwise. But as the above example clearly shows, conscious and unconscious motivations were also in powerful play for the researcher. After many discussions about the data I began to understand some of my own unconscious patterns which became very apparent in this particular interview and were present in others. Because of some of the painful things that have happened in my family, like Mr Cole, I felt very uncomfortable when invited to discuss them by 'outsiders' and wanted to relieve my anxiety and pain by changing the subject. It was only after many months of interrogation and debate amongst the research team that this emerged. Ironically, while this particular interaction created more empathy between me and Mr Cole, psychically all I wanted to do was get out of the door that had been previously shut in my face (Walkerdine et al 2001: 101-103).

Angela and Heather: projective identification and educational anxiety

The following case of Angela, a middle-class twenty-one year old and her sister Heather provides a stark example of how individual subjectivities can be formed in relation to other family members. This provides a good illustration of the second and third levels of analysis in which the family narrative was problematised through an exploration of the unconscious projections, introjections and transferences at play.

Angela was a middle-class, twenty-one year old high achiever who went to a prestigious private girls' school where she got ten grade A GCSEs and 3 As and 1 B at A level. She went on to Oxford to study medicine. Angela had a younger sister, Heather, who 'only' got 8 GCSEs and 2 A levels (all at grades A to C). She was also a gifted musician. Although not as outstanding as Angela's, Heather's exam results had nevertheless placed her within the top 10% of the 18 year old national cohort at that time. However, within the family, the difference between the sisters was exaggerated into a huge gulf. Angela was seen as the success of the family while Heather, despite the reality of her achievements, was viewed as a 'failure' by her sister and both parents. They variously described her as 'not very bright', 'not very academic' and a 'slow learner'. She would not be going to university, even though her grades would allow her to, but to a catering college to do a diploma in hotel management (Walkerdine et al 2001: 95).

From the interview with Angela's mother we learnt that Heather's identity as the 'slow' one who had to struggle, compared to the 'bonny', 'bouncy' Angela, had germinated from the moment of her difficult birth.

> Mother: I had an awful birth with Heather. I had a very long second stage of labour. I think she suffered a little bit of oxygen deficiency myself and I'm sure I'm not wrong. A doctor would cover it up and say no, but I'm quite sure that's what happened, because she was very slow to react when she was born, and I'm sure that that was what has happened, because they really were scurrying around at the end, and I knew that I'd been left in second stage too long. (...) I felt wretched and I had this sort of miserable little scrap in the pram you know.
> JM: She was miserable was she? I mean, is that...

> Mother: She was poorly looking, she didn't look thriving, not like Angela had. Angela had always been so bonny and so bouncy and so noisy, and she was quite different. But she has thrived and she's um, I've worked very hard with her, harder than any of them, I've had to help her a tremendous amount actually.

I would suggest that this mother had carried a lot of anxiety about Heather's intellect because of her conviction that she had been deprived of oxygen for a period during her birth. The family narrative carried elements of this with Angela, her mother and father all counterposing Heather's 'slowness' and 'struggle' with Angela's intellectual quickness and easy facility for learning. June Melody - who interviewed the family members - came away, at that point without the knowledge of her academic achievements, with the impression that Heather, whom she did not meet, was indeed an academic failure and possibly had learning difficulties. It was only later that the complexities and contradictions in the family narrative were discovered.

Although initially persuaded by the family narrative, June had a strong feeling that there was something wrong, that the narrative did not quite fit. When the researchers felt emotions of anxiety, anger, annoyance, love, hate or boredom they took these to be indicators of the presence of transferences. These are the same clues that psychoanalysts use in helping them to recognise counter-transference in the analytic setting. Briggs (1970, 1987) believed that feelings such as annoyance in a fieldwork setting indicated a transference block which impeded empathy, so she used them as a research tool. In this case June felt very uncomfortable and discussed her feelings with the team. It was later when she re-read her interview notes and listened to the taped interviews that she decided to get a copy of Heather's exam results. These clearly exposed the notion that Heather was an academic failure as unrealistic. For all of the working-class girls in our sample to get 8 GCSEs and 2 A levels Grades A-C would be a cause for celebration (Walkerdine et al 2001: 96-97).

Triangulation is a method developed within mainstream qualitative sociological research to deal with problems of validity (Denzin 1978) and refers to the injunction to check pieces of information against at least one other independent

source before regarding them as 'credible' (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Using this method in the case of Heather and Angela, information on Heather's educational failure would have been amply 'triangulated' by the testimonies of three members of her family (Walkerdine et al 2001: 95).

Regardless of whether members of the same family can be regarded as independent sources of data for the purposes of arriving at some 'truth', I wanted to use the insights of post-structuralism and psychoanalysis to go beyond the issue of whether Heather's 'slowness' was 'true' or not, but what that statement meant, and to whom. The starting point of analysis (level one) was an apparently unproblematic description by some family members of Angela as bright and Heather as slow. But to have taken this description at face value would be to miss the complex dynamics that were going on, not only within this particular family but across the middle-class sample. For this family, as for many other middle-class families, there was a fear of failure. It was partly this fear that produced the 'Heather is slow' fiction: Angela's brightness was intricately linked to Heather's slowness. Of course, it is crucial to acknowledge that in the circles in which only the top performance is considered good enough, Heather had indeed failed. The fiction, created out of the unconscious fears and phantasies of the family, thus became self-fulfilling (Walkerdine et al 2001: 94-96).

Within the middle-class families there existed a particular understanding of what constituted failure that was vastly different from the way success and failure were judged in the working-class families. This understanding of failure nevertheless had its own 'real effects' (and affects), producing 'objective' readings by which to understand performance (on the surface) and on a much deeper level the subjectivity of family members. In Chapter Six I explore the ways in which intense fears of failure - of failing to reproduce oneself and one's children as bourgeois professionals - operated to produce high levels of anxiety around educational attainment for many middle-class families. In the case of Angela and Heather, Heather's 'failure' was not only a projection within that particular family but also an effect of the relationship between specific social and cultural norms, discourses and family processes. This was neither a simply

social nor a simply psychic process but had to be understood as working in a complex psychosocial manner (Walkerdine et al 2001: 98).

Conclusion

Ideas from post-structuralism have been central in moving beyond both social and psychological determinisms to explain the nature of subjectivity. From this perspective experience is viewed as a complex, usually contradictory mixture of unconscious desires, conscious rationality and various available positions in a multiplicity of discourses (Hollway 1998). 'These discourses in which interviewees are positioned and position themselves, in the context of a particular relationship with the interviewer, exist at both a conscious and an unconscious level' (Walkerdine et al 2001: 99). The three levels of analysis outlined in this chapter are designed to help explore and theorise responses that are not communicated in a singular or logically consistent way, as is the case with the unitary rational subject assumed by traditional social science research.

In this chapter I have sought to demonstrate the importance of engaging with the emotions and unconscious processes of the researcher in order to demonstrate the complete embeddedness of the social and psychic in the research process. By focusing on the place of the subjectivity of the researcher, I have critiqued the notion that methodological interventions, such as triangulation, or indeed a 'reflexivity' that remains at the level of the conscious can ameliorate the excesses of the presence of the researcher in qualitative research.

I have shown how engagement with the researcher's subjectivity is not the same as employing a confessional style, or producing a narrative that is more about the researcher than it is about the interviewee. Instead, the approach taken in the 'three levels of analysis' depends upon the active interrogation of the unconscious phantasies, as well as conscious fantasies of the researcher and their place in the research narrative. I have tried to show how this interrogation can sometimes involve the researcher taking on knowledge that,

because it contains difficult material, may be heavily defended against. This is a process that contains none of the relief of the confessional. It is a process that exposes the difficulties of reaching an 'agreed' version of events and takes us towards an account which is necessarily fractured and partial.

By taking seriously the exploration of the intersubjective realms of phantasy/fantasy of both researcher and researched, I am not advocating an abandonment of any notion of the 'real' and therefore of empirical work altogether. Nor does it mean that the research tells us more about the researcher than it does about those under study. I am arguing, however, that there are no methodological solutions to the problems of taking difference into account in social research, nor the complexities of power that situate us as researchers in relations of difference. Rather than concentrate on methodological techniques which underscore the notion that, if only we can agree, we can know what is really going on, I have aimed for a model of interpretation which is at once historical and personal (Elliot and Spezzano 1999), social, cultural and psychic (Lucey et al 2003a).

Early on in this chapter I referred to Phase One of *Project 4:21* in order to show the beginnings of developing a way of working with the emotions of the researcher. In the following chapter I look more closely at this first phase of the study when Group A, the twenty-one year olds, were four years old at home with their mothers and at nursery school. This chapter focuses on the ways in which classed and gendered discourses of regulation, intersect with and work through aspects of the emotional relationships between mothers and daughters.

PART II

CHAPTER THREE

THEMES FROM *DEMOCRACY IN THE KITCHEN*

Introduction

This chapter reviews an earlier analysis of the Group A sample of girls at Phase One, when they were four years old at home with their mothers and outlines the main arguments made then. The central thesis of that analysis, developed in the book *Democracy in the Kitchen* (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989), is that women are regulated through discourses relating to mothering and to the education of young children, and, through that regulation, middle-class child-rearing practices are understood as 'normal' whilst working-class practices are pathologised. Using examples from the Phase One data from *Project 4:21* the chapter draws out aspects of the construction and constitution of gendered and classed identities through an examination of every day interactions between these mothers and daughters. In particular, it looks at the turning of housework into play and pedagogic tasks; the ways in which power and authority are differently played out between mothers and daughters; and, how difficult emotions are channelled into rational discourse.

This work laid down important ground for subsequent analysis of the working-class and middle-class girls at later stages of the research. Not only this, but *Democracy in The Kitchen* was part of a body of work that struggled to create new territory in which to critically engage with conventional academic, popular and political discourses on the production of classed feminine identities through the regulation of mothering practices and the socialisation of girls[1]. These are all themes that are explored and extended throughout this thesis (as discussed at the end of this chapter).

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[1] Feminist research and writing in the field of social class and mothering which builds upon this work has continued. However, it is not the aim of this chapter to engage in detail with that excellent body of work. For an update of discussions in this area see Phoenix et al 1991; Phoenix 1996; Reay 1998a; Lawler 2000.

The Calibration and Regulation of Mothering

Foucault (1979) maintained that modern government works through the most routine aspects of the administration of our lives - in schools, social work offices, law courts, tax offices, hospitals - and depends upon a set of facts gained from scientific research. These ideas are central to a mode of government which is not overt, but works through fictions which function in truth. Through the careful, thorough and relentless calibration of subjects, the government of them is hidden in important ways. In this perspective, social groups are produced and reproduced through strategies of regulation, forms of government and power which regulate the day-to-day practices of ordinary people. Subjects do not pre-exist the discursive practices through which what it means to be a subject are constituted. However, those practices are crosscut by relations of fantasy/phantasy, both on the part of the apparatuses of regulation and by unconscious and conscious defences of individuals and groups.

Importantly, instead of having always to be regulated overtly by the state, scientific 'facts' about the population become part of the discourses through which subjects are formed and through which subjects regulate themselves. In the analysis of the Group A girls at Phase One, a Foucauldian perspective was used to closely examine how facts about mothers, children and learning came to be known and how certain scientific ideas codified fears and fantasies about a proletariat who had to be tamed (Walkerdine and Lucey op cit).

Natural Attachment

Many studies of mothers and their infants, either in laboratory conditions or in their homes, have been carried out in order to map the interactions between them in minute detail (see Rutter 1972). The development of attachment theory was central to the construction of certain ideas about mothering in the first half of the twentieth century. In *Democracy in the Kitchen* a line is traced between the growth of ideas about 'natural'

mothering, from Harry Harlow's (1958, 1961) experiments with monkeys through to Bowlby's (1971) work on attachment in babies, to the notion of an all-consuming 'love' which is necessary for correct and healthy mothering to take place (Schaffer 1977).

Psychologists were concerned with the kinds of responses the mother made to her infant early on and how this related to later attachment behaviour, that is, signs of clinging, distress and so on. Blehar, Lieberman and Ainsworth (1977) studied interactions in the homes of twenty six American middle-class mother-child pairs at the ages of six, nine, twelve and fifteen weeks, concentrating mostly on face-to-face interactions to produce a coding of maternal behaviour and of infant behaviour. In one experiment they observed and classified the ways and extent to which children responded to their mothers' return after a short absence from her. Those infants who sought and maintained physical contact with the mother they categorised as 'normative'. Importantly, it was the mothers who were viewed in earlier observations to pace their behaviour to that of the child, encourage more interaction and were playful, whose infants were most likely to display this healthy attachment behaviour (1977: 185).

This study and others like them paved the way for the emergence of the notion of sensitivity in mothering. The idea grew that what mattered most was not whether the mother was with the child all the time, but how sensitive she was in the minute detail of her interactions (Bowlby 1971; Rutter 1972). It is here that the work on emotional attachments was welded onto concerns not only for mental health but also for the educational success of working-class children (Urwin 1985).

In *Democracy in the Kitchen* the strong movement of social reform in the 1940s and 1950s was examined; a movement that veered away from the pessimism of social Darwinism towards an environmentalism which, instead of stressing aggression and war, emphasised the possibility of reform through love and nurturance. Bowlby and the object relations school of psychoanalysis rejected Freud's notion of instinct or drives and instead highlighted evolutionary adaptedness of behavioural systems (Winnicott 1957; Bowlby 1971). This gave an 'environmental' solution to social

reformers, that, rather than emphasising in-built and therefore unchangeable instincts of love and hate, as in Klein's theorisations (Klein 1952), instead pointed to behavioural patterns of mothering which were amenable to intervention and change. As Bowlby (1971) maintains, the environment was understood not in terms of a complex interplay of material, economic and social conditions, not as oppression and exploitation, but as a key to social change, a manipulable solution to reform brought about through the infant's interaction with the principal figure in that environment, namely the mother.

Bowlby claimed that attachment requires that mothers and infants bond at birth and he stressed the importance of the continual presence of the biological mother in the early years. Riley (1983) notes that while Bowlby did not claim that neurosis was inevitably produced in children if the mother was not at home all the time, the ideological climate at the time popularised his work to fit a set of post-war conditions and assumptions about women's labour.

'Equal But Different'

When Barbara Tizard and Martin Hughes carried out the research that led to the publication of *Young Children Learning* (1984) they were particularly interested in demonstrating that working-class children were not linguistically deprived and that these mothers provided a rich linguistic environment. While they did indeed demonstrate this effectively in relation to the mother-daughter pairs they studied, they also demonstrated that the nursery schools that the girls attended did not greatly enhance the language of the working-class girls, but attended more to the interactive style of the middle-class girls, which was more assertive. Tizard and Hughes wanted to argue against a theory of linguistic deprivation that had at its heart the idea that working-class children failed at school because of some fault in the linguistic practices of mothering. While agreeing with their argument about deprivation, in *Democracy in the Kitchen* it was argued that by ignoring the fact that their sample was composed of girls, Tizard and Hughes had failed to examine both aspects of gender and the classed work of mothering. In an

re-analysis of the data from Tizard and Hughes' study, plus an analysis of follow-up data collected when the girls were ten years old (Phase Two), *Democracy in the Kitchen* discussed the classed nature of the regulation of the practices of mothering and the way that this produces differences in the socialisation patterns of daughters.

Sensitive Mothers

Tizard and Hughes (1984) set some store by the idea that those mothers who were most sensitive to their daughters' emotional and physical needs will also be most sensitive to their linguistic needs, producing more advanced language and consequently intellectual development. This is in line with developmental models which mix together the psychodynamic work of John Bowlby (1971) and accounts of linguistic development that stress the intersubjective production of meaning, in which the mother provides a scaffold for the child's tentative meanings (see Walkerdine and Lucey 1989, for a full discussion). Although Tizard and Hughes do not explicitly state that sensitive mothers produce children who perform well at school, the implication is there in the theoretical framework to which they refer. That is, that mothering is a natural process through which child development is achieved, either normally, progressing towards rationality and achievement of academic success, or through the production of the bourgeois individual (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989).

Popular and academic texts on education stress the need for parents (read mothers) to be responsible for getting it right for their children from infancy onwards (David et al 1994; Reay 1998a and b; Vincent and Warren 1999). One of the central points made in *Democracy in the Kitchen* was that working-class and middle-class women have been strongly, though differently regulated as mothers, having the responsibility to produce normality, correct development and educational success. Middle-class women are understood as the purveyors of normality and have to be strictly regulated, and indeed to regulate themselves through what counts as love and guilt - after all who would want their child to grow up 'abnormal' or

'disadvantaged'? By contrast, working-class women demonstrate a number of tendencies in their child rearing practices which are considered abnormal. This means that they have to be policed by educational, social welfare and medical agencies (middle-class women indeed) because they tend to utilise strategies of child rearing which have far stronger boundaries between work and play, make power differentials clear and do not value rationality at the expense of other ways of being. It is these women who for many decades have been held responsible for the educational failure of their children.

The proponents of sensitivity assume that sensitivity comes from recognising and meeting emotional needs and thereby being sensitive to their meanings. It is from this base that mothers provide the grounding for educational achievement. However, if we examine the relationship between girls with sensitive and insensitive mothers, as defined by Tizard and Hughes, we see that the concept has no predictive potential at all, especially when it comes to the working-class mothers and daughters. What was quite striking in *Project 4:21* was that some of the highest-performing working-class girls were the daughters of 'insensitive' mothers, though the same did not hold true for the middle-class sample: Tizard and Hughes do not designate any middle-class mothers as insensitive.

For example, the working-class girls called Dawn, Nicky and Maura all had insensitive mothers as defined by Tizard and Hughes, yet their performance was above the average for the working-class sample: all achieved over 5 GCSEs between grades A to C and went on to A levels and higher education. If the concept of sensitivity only has predictive power for those mothers and daughters whose subjectivity is constituted through the discourses of sensitive mothering, namely the middle-classes, then while this is crucial for the middle-classes, it does not determine working-class success and failure (see Chapters Four and Five). This also points to the problem of using the middle-class as the norm against which to judge working-class practices.

In *Democracy in the Kitchen* it was argued that the regulation of mothers varied according to class, with consequent differences in the regulative strategies

adopted by the mothers when bringing up their daughters. In addition to this it was argued that theories of socialisation (Chetwynd and Hartnett 1978; Chodorow 1978) assume a psychological subject made social through the taking on of roles and stereotypes, usually provided by significant others such as parents. Such approaches assume that the way children turn out is a direct consequence of what parents do. This invests parents with enormous power as well as the potential for guilt.

In *Democracy in the Kitchen*, a number of practices were highlighted through which mother and daughter positions were produced, especially in respect of the production of the normal or pathological bourgeois individual. The apparatuses of social regulation, the 'truths' through which a modern individual is assumed to be produced, demand a style of parenting which stresses learning through play.

> In this way the fact that they are domestic tasks, and that women must aid their children's development by transforming their domestic labour into a pedagogy, is completely hidden (...) and transformed into something else. That something else is the very basis on which they are judged to be sensitive mothers, because in responding to what is described as children's needs, they are aiding their development.' (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989: 74)

Potentially anything can form the basis of such learning, from laying the table to preparing muesli, but what was clear in the study was that not only were the boundaries between work and play very fluid, if not broken down, but mothers often found it very difficult to actually assert their need to get on with their domestic work for fear of upsetting the fragile regime of child development and education through play. For example Sarah's mother set up the cleaning of the fish tank as a problem of logic for her daughter:

Mother: Now, how are we going to get the fish out of the big bowl and into the little one, d'you think?
Sarah: I know, well, we get a thing and then put some water in it and then put it into there. Catch the fish.
Mother: And catch the fish?
Sarah: Yes.
Mother: How about something like that? [M holds up the plastic pot.]
Sarah: Yes, I think that would do. Wash it out!

Sarah's mother treated the activity as pedagogic, as an educational task from which Sarah could learn about capacity and size. In the extract below, we see how Sarah's mother used the task to demonstrate even more complex mathematical concepts such as refraction through glass and water (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989:73-4).

> Mother: They look a bit bigger through their glass, don't they?
> Sarah: Yes.
> Mother: Even the small one looks pretty big, doesn't it?
> Sarah: Through the glass.
> Mother: Look over the top and see if it looks different.
> Sarah: No, that one's little now, when I look from the top. And it's bigger when I look through the glass.

But very importantly, Sarah's mother did not let this activity become like a lesson; she kept it informal and playful, both stressed in educational literature of that time:

> You are probably helping your child to get ready for Mathematics in many ways, maybe without realising it! Here are some of the many activities that you can do with your child which will help.
> Laying the table – counting, getting the knives in the right place, etc.
> Going shopping – handling money, counting items in the basket.
> Dressing and undressing – sorting clothes into piles.
> Helping with cooking – weighing, measuring.
> Playing with water – at bathtime, washing up. (....)
> No doubt you can think of many more. The important thing is that you help your child to get hold of the basic ideas of Maths, such as sorting, matching and comparing. By sharing an activity with your child and by talking to him, you can begin to introduce the correct 'Mathematical' words such as big and small, few and many, longest and shortest and so on. But don't turn it into a lesson. All these things can be done incidentally as a part of day to day events.
> (Early Mathematical Experiences, General Guide 1978: 11)

When we came to the working-class practices, however, the picture was considerably different. Not only were work and play strongly separated (or as Bernstein (1977) argued, strongly framed and classified), but mothers often insisted that their daughters play on their own so as not to disrupt their housework. For example, Nicky's mother insisted that she could not play with her daughter because she had 'got washing to do', 'got ironing to do', 'got altering to do', adding 'Yeah, well, it all takes time love' (Walkerdine and

Lucey 1989: 81). Indeed it did, and not infrequently middle-class women employed others to do this, which meant that they had more time to play.

The power of the puzzling mind and the making of meaning

Tizard and Hughes put forward the notion of the 'puzzling mind of the four year old' and the concept of 'intellectual search' in order to challenge existing ideas, particularly Piagetian ones, about what four year olds are intellectually capable of (Tizard and Hughes 1984: 123). In order to exemplify this concept they refered to an extract of a conversation between a middle-class mother and her daughter Samantha, who were eating their lunch, when the window-cleaner began to clean the windows of the dining-room where they were sitting:

> Samantha: Mummy.
> Mother: Mmmm
> Samantha: Um, she can't pay everybody, er, the win, or all the bills to the window cleaner can she?
> Mother: What?
> Samantha: Marion can't give all the bill, all the bills…
> Mother: No, she can't pay all, everybody's bills.
> Samantha: To the window cleaner.
> Mother: Well, she sometimes pays mine if I'm out. She sometimes pays Ruth's up the road if she's out. I always pay her back though.
> Samantha: 'Cos it's fair.
> Mother: Mmm, it is.
> (Pause)
> Samantha: Umm, but where does she leave the money?
> (Pause)
> Mother: She doesn't leave it anywhere, she gives it, she hands it to the winder cleaner, after he's finished.
> Samantha: And then she gives it to us.
> Mother: No, no, she doesn't have to pay us.
> Samantha: Then the window cleaner gives it to us?
> Mother: No, we give the window cleaner money, he does work for us, and we have to give him money.
> Samantha: Why?
> Mother: Well, because he's been working for us cleaning our windows. He doesn't do it for nothing.
> Samantha: Why do you have money if you have … if people clean your windows?
> Mother: Well, the window cleaner needs money, doesn't he?
> Samantha: Why?
> Mother: To buy clothes for his children and food for them to eat.
> Samantha: Well sometimes window cleaners don't have children.

Mother: Quite often they do.
Samantha: And something on his own to eat, and for curtains.
Mother: And for paying his gas bills and electricity bills. And for paying for petrol for his car. All sorts of things you have to pay for, you see. You have to earn money somehow, and he earns it by cleaning other people's windows, and big shop windows and things.
Samantha: And then the person who got the money gives it to the people.
(Walkerdine and Lucey 1989: 88-89)

This example was interpreted as demonstrating 'the power of the puzzling mind'. However, this universalist model could not account for the fact that not all four year olds needed to puzzle over the same issues, something that Tizard and Hughes themselves raise, but could not answer adequately. After all, they did not come to the conclusion that non-puzzling working-class children were more advanced than puzzling middle-class ones. How then to provide an account of meanings which engages with the specificity of their production, which does not pathologise difference or subsume it into a sociological universalism?

This example tells us something very *specific* about the meanings produced for and by a girl in specific place in the gender and class division of labour. A universalised account links in with a particular view of the sensitive mother as one who creates meanings for the child, who engages effectively with her daughter's puzzlement and extends and expands her meanings. This is 'scaffolding', 'fine-tuning'.

The idea of a generic four year old and a 'puzzling mind' suggests a natural sequence of development which renders all minds an exemplar of 'mind'. That some four year olds should have to puzzle over who works for whom and why then becomes implicitly the norm. What is worrying about this is it's specificity. It is normal for four year olds not to understand certain things, but what things and why? Rather than being general, what Samantha did not understand was precisely related to her family's position; a family in which there were no explicit worries about money appearing in the transcripts, and one in which the window cleaner was not the only person paid for his services; they also employed a cleaner.

In contrast, some of the girls' parents had the kind of worries about money which lead Margaret's mother to have to wait to buy food until her husband got home from work with his pay packet.

> Mother: Haven't had Daddy's money yet.
> Margaret: I've got no money
> Mother: No, I haven't got enough to get my shopping. All of it.
> Margaret: Not all of it?
> Mother: Mary [neighbour]'s just taken five pounds. If she's got some she'll bring change back. It's not enough to get all that (points to shopping list). So when Daddy gets paid I'll get some more money and then I'll go and get the rest.
> (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989: 92)

In other cases girls were very explicit in their understanding that money earned through the labour of the mother and father buys goods and that wages were low and money was scarce. But the concept of 'intellectual search' cannot adequately explain this difference. What matters here is what was being puzzled over compared with what was common knowledge in some working-class homes.

The aim in exploring these examples is not so much to criticise Tizard and Hughes as to understand why certain views of development, common to most modern developmental psychology, make the assumptions they do and the effect this has when used as an interpretative framework on data to produce a truth about development and therefore also about mothering. There is a danger that these assumptions lead to a framework that is unable to link what a particular four year old does or does not know, to any theory that can take into account the social, material and economic specificity of children's lives.

If Samantha's puzzlement about the labour of the window cleaner was related to the social position of her family, similarly, the working-class women's differentiation of their work from other activities related both to their material circumstances and to what work meant to them. The working-class women often presented a picture of having to rush to work, to clean an office or pub. In addition, the regulation of their husbands' work was made explicit in a way never spoken of by the middle-class women. This was understood

by the working-class girls who learned the exchange relation firmly, painfully. For instance, Nicky began by asking her mother why her father was not at home for lunch that day:

> Mother: It's gone dinner time, doesn't come here for lunch, does he? Now now, works too far away.
> Nicky: Why don't he come up here for lunch?
> Mother: 'Cos it takes too long for him to get home and get back to work again.
> Nicky: And he's not allowed to?
> Mother: No.
> Nicky: Or he get, or he won't get lots of money?
> Mother: No, he won't get lots of money and then you won't get no new slippers.
> Nicky: No, or new pumps
> Mother: Won't get them both this week love.
> (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989: 94)

The writers of a standard textbook on primary-school mathematics (of that time) strongly implied that the idea of money as exchange value is an abstract concept and that young children can only reason with concrete materials, actual coins and so forth. They gave the following advice to teachers:

> [money] is used only for buying and he pays in coins for what he asked for, two pence, four pence etc. The idea of money as meaning the exchange value of goods will be beyond him for a long time to come. (Williams and Shuard 1976: 51)

The notion that a concept such as exchange value is abstract is only a problem if it is considered as part of a concrete/abstract dichotomy. A widely accepted idea in developmental psychology is that children's minds develop towards abstraction and that complexity equals abstraction. However, exchange value is only 'abstract' in its inclusion within economic theory. The exchange relation for girls such as Nicky quoted above was painfully concrete. But for a child such as Samantha, who did not have to confront those realities with the same imperative (but confronts others such as people working *for* her family), it could indeed appear as a puzzling, abstract idea. The *meaning* of work or money therefore must be seen as intimately tied to the particularity of the lives of the different children. It could be argued that the circumstances of some of the working-class girls taught them very early a complex lesson about exchange.

Yet nowhere was it suggested that this might be more advanced than the puzzling mind of Samantha.

The main point of these examples is to illustrate that there is a social production of meanings which varies according to particular circumstances. Meanings are made in practices, and those practices often involve regulation. Regulation of domestic practices is primarily the province of mothers. Meanings made within domestic practices therefore present the mother as the originator of meanings. However, this is to elide their social formation. For whilst the mother actively makes meanings intersubjectively with her daughter, she also carries pre-existing meanings that vary according to the socio-economic conditions that the families were, and are in, the understanding and experience of labour and the discourses through which the meanings were regulated by external agencies: neither mother nor daughter were the sole originator of them.

Rationality and emotion

The sensitive, normal mother set up practices that aimed to playfully teach not only basic rationality, but also the rationalisation of emotion. Such practices are connected to the notion that successful parenting relies on creating an illusion of autonomy so convincing that the child actually believes herself to be 'free' (Newson and Newson 1976). If these middle-class daughters managed to argue rationally for having or doing something that their mothers did not want them to have or do, they usually got their way, thus learning a very important lesson about their own power and the power of rational argument. The belief about rational argument is founded on the very scientific rationality that underpinned post-Enlightenment science and a government of liberal democracy based on rationality and logic. Hence, these girls were not only learning a valuable lesson for their future as professionals active in the management of the liberal social order, but they were also being led to believe in the power of their own argument. The psychologists, John and Elizabeth Newson (1976), argued that children should be given the illusion of choice and of their own power, because it is this that allows them to feel psychological autonomy. In contrast, damaging authoritarian attitudes and practices are mainly located in the working and lower

middle-classes (following Reich 1975). Mothers are seen as the key to breaking the cycle of authoritarianism and the terrible dangers which such authoritarianism presents to democracy (Riley 1983). The principle of autonomy and the exercise of agency enshrines the bourgeois agent of free will, economic 'man', who has grown psychologically independent of his parents and now operates as a free agent, with a strong and bounded ego. This concept is central to how development is understood as a path to rational, autonomous action, itself the centre of a definition of maturity. Mothers are positioned to impart such lessons to their daughters through the micro-practices of everyday domestic life.

This was achieved to some extent by the middle-class mothers of *Project 4:21* in the way in which they encouraged their daughters to be sensitive to other people's and their own feelings. Strong emotional responses were discouraged, just as powerful emotions were converted into rational argument. Powerful emotions had to be expressed as nice and not nice feelings. In this way, girls could be both feminine and avoid what are understood as the worst excesses of 'animal passions'. For many of the middle-class mothers there were nice and nasty feelings, sensible and silly behaviour. These emotional strategies were produced through a variety of practices through which mothers regulated the emotional responses of their daughters. When daughters expressed violent emotions and especially aggression towards their mothers it was common for the mothers to respond with phrases like 'That's not very nice' when in fact the daughter said 'I'll poke your eyes off' (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989: 124). In the following extract, Julie is singing a song and her mother asks her what the song is about:

Mother: What is it?
Julie: A nursery rhyme.
Mother: A nursery rhyme?
Julie: Mmm
Mother: About a princess? You know a nursery rhyme about a princess don't you?
Julie: What?
Mother: (unclear)
Julie: Why did she?
Mother: You know why ... (unclear)

Julie: Why?
Mother: Because a wicked fairy cast a spell.
Julie: What for? What for?
Mother: Because the princess's Mum and Daddy, the king and queen, didn't invite the wicked fairy to the christening party and she got so cross that she became ever so nasty (unclear) fall asleep. And how did she wake up? Do you remember?
Julie: No.
Mother: How did she wake up?
Julie: Don't know.
Mother: How do you wake me up in the morning?
Julie: Don't know.
Mother: How do you wake me up, when I'm asleep? You come in and kiss me don't you.
Julie: I have a kick … I kick you!
Mother: Oh, really.
Julie: To wake you up, not really.
Mother: Well the prince didn't kick the princess. He kissed her … and he woke her up.
Julie: He kicked her, kicked her in the face.
Mother: Yes, that's right.
Julie: A, ha ha ha. He didn't really, did he?
Mother: When I come in in the morning to wake you up, I'll just kick you in the face, all right?
Julie: Noooh!
Mother: Well then!
Julie: Yes, do that to me, all right.
Mother: You'd like to do that, would you?
Julie: No, I kick your face, all right?
Mother: I think that's really horrible.
Julie: Huh huh [laugh] Do you think it's nice.
Mother: No, I don't.
Julie: I kick you in your face
Mother: I really don't.
Julie: I kick you in your face
Mother: If you carry on saying that I'm going to ignore you.
Julie: Kick you in your face. Are you 'gnoring me?
Mother: *Ig*noring you.
Julie: Yes.
Mother: Taking no notice, yes. It's not very interesting. It's very boring.
Julie: Please!
Mother: Please what?
Julie: Please don't 'gnoring me
Mother: *Ig*nore
(Walkerdine and Lucey 1989: 125-126)

Julie's reworking of this fairy-tale is interesting in many ways. She subverted the romance and harmony implied in the kiss, by substituting a phonologically close word, 'kick'. Here, she took the active, masculine

position (the prince) and substituted hate for love, a shift that helped articulate the ambivalence of love and hate that she seemed to express. Her mother, however, found it difficult to deal with being the subject of her daughter's hatred. Although Julie clearly articulated that she did not 'really' kick her mother awake, her mother called it 'horrible', not nice, threatened to ignore it and resorted to describing it as uninteresting and boring. This way, although she deflected Julie's violence, she did so by operating as though it were simply a not very nice and rather impolite emotion. She eventually attempts to convert the conflict into a lesson on pronunciation, by correcting Julie's ''gnoring'. What then was Julie to do with this emotion her mother so forcefully displaced? No matter how hard Julie tried, her mother would not reciprocate, but neither did she make her authority or power explicit.

It is important to say that a few working-class mothers also dealt with their daughters hateful, aggressive feelings towards them or others, including siblings, in a similar way; preferring to ignore, to point out that 'it's not very nice' to say things like that, or call the child 'silly' (ibid. p127). Nevertheless, these mothers were the exception. It was far more usual for the working-class mothers to be very explicit both about power differentials and their own position of authority. Sally was upstairs; her mother was cooking in the kitchen. Sally called for her mother to come up because she wanted her to do something for her:

> Mother: I will in a minute, I'll do the pastry first.
> Sally: Now!
> Mother: Sally! Don't tell me what to do.
> Sally: I want to beat you.
> Mother: You're getting too cheeky and you're going to get a smack.
> (Ibid. p130)

On the few occasions where working-class girls expressed violence towards their mothers, or, much more commonly, when they openly defied their mothers' wishes, most of the mothers took up a stance of positional power. They did not intellectualise the problem, or turn their own or their daughters' negative emotions into 'feelings'. They warned or threatened much more, and made it quite clear that they were angry, that they too harboured such emotions' (Ibid. p131).

Some working-class mothers also allowed a space in which passionate emotions and violence towards them could be expressed safely. Jacky was in the bedroom with her mother who was sorting out old doll's clothes. Jacky pretended to hit her mother who then pretended to hit her back.

> Jacky: You can't even touch me. You can't do it (laughs.)
> Mother: You didn't even touch me.
> Jacky: I did. Did! (Laughing.)
> Mother: That doesn't hurt. Doesn't hurt.
> Jacky: Look! (Jacky really hits her mother.)
> Mother: Next time you do it I'll smack you.
> Jacky: I 'macked you!
> Mother: No, *I'll* smack *you*.
> Jacky: (Laughs.) You didn't know what to do, what to do.
> (Ibid. p131)

Violence, or the potential for violence may emerge and be contained in games which have some physical component. For example, Nicky's mother managed to turn her daughter's desire to 'beat her up' into a game in which the mother pretended to beat her daughter up, getting her into a lock and tickling her (ibid. p. 135).

These examples are given as a way of highlighting the importance of places in which the expression of resistance and even violence, could be negotiated in a non-conflictual way. These working-class mothers did not intellectualise or reason the resistance away, for it was not understood as a threat to their autonomy. At the same time they were not afraid to regulate the child. The broader issue of femininity and violence, although central to this discussion, cannot be fully explored in this thesis (see Lucey 2003 for a more detailed discussion). Suffice to say that discourses of aggression and violence relate almost exclusively to boys and men, which girls' and women's lack of aggression then gets counterposed to (Jack 1999).

Middle-class children were required to make intellectual responses to emotional situations and in this way 'rationality' became a potent defence; a way in which irrational emotions including fear, envy and anger, could be 'mastered' and made safe. It was also a strategy for the regulation of conflict whereby powerful, potentially destructive emotions were transformed into attributes of the

participants: passion became feelings which one must be sensitive towards because they belonged to people who were 'upset' or frustrated'. The irrational had to be transformed into the rational and conflict apparently dissipated through rational argument and power relations became interpersonal relations.

Perhaps, most importantly, middle-class mothers taught their daughters the art of rational debate, which gave power. Daughters learned that you could challenge the mother if you could make a rational argument for that challenge. Thus anything was possible, within reason. Conversely we could understand the middle-class mothers as dealing with anxieties by intellectualising them. For there were some glaring contradictions. These middle-class women are professionals, but they were at the bottom of the professional labour market, on part-time and insecure contracts and as mothers whose careers had been disrupted by motherhood.

> All their intellectual endeavours have not allowed them to master the world nor saved them from the contradictions of this independence and the serving of children (....) they are expending their energy in teaching them to intellectualise, as though that were a magic charm that could ward off the struggles they will inevitably have to face in adult life. (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989: 162)

Practices like these had a profound effect on what it meant to grow up middle-class and female, when rational argument won the day and powerful emotions were at best not very nice. Such practices differed profoundly from the working-class ones in which working-class mothers were less likely to tolerate direct challenges to their authority and the mother's power over her daughter was quite explicitly stated. In this sense then, the practices the working-class mothers adopted threatened the rational autonomy and nice feelings that are central to the bourgeois order. It is not surprising, therefore, that working-class families are often blamed for the failure of their children within the education system by professionals who want to find some pathological practices that can then be put right. However, while it is true to say that these practices are outside the norm, there is no reason to suggest that there is anything wrong with them. Indeed, more than this, if we are looking at educational success and failure, some of the most successful working-class young women came from families in which boundaries, of

authority between mother and daughter, and between work and play, were most strongly drawn.

Although there is a great deal of surveillance and regulation of working-class family practices, the countervailing practices nevertheless survive, and on the basis of these some girls are even successful at school. It would be difficult to argue in some simple sense that these practices are forms of resistance to the imposed norm. Rather, I would argue that they are cultural practices that have validity because they make sense in relation to the government of social relations of working-class life. The notion of 'democratic' mothering and the prioritization of reason may have little meaning for working-class women who have little investment in performing mothering work which obscures regulation, since they are very well aware of the very overt workings of power and regulation in their own lives, and it is this knowledge they will pass on to their daughters (Lawler 2000).

> [Working-class mothers] know that you cannot have what you want. They do not believe that they are free or have access to plenty. They are poor, often live in bad housing, they work hard, the world is hard. They must teach this to their daughters and they do so often, by making their power visible. They stop, they say no, they regulate overtly. It is a liberal fantasy to believe that power is removed if regulation is made covert, if the girl believes herself … to be an agent of free choice, of free will. This autonomy is a sham.' (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989: 138)

While the professional and bourgeois order is founded upon the notion of the rational and autonomous subject, working-class life is, at the same time, epitomised by overt forms of power, in which employees are subject to exploitative and oppressive working conditions, overt authority and a strong distinction between paid work and play. It could be argued therefore that while these practices are pathological to a bourgeois norm, they are extremely well adapted to the conditions of working-class life. Are they, however, well adapted to the new social order in which the constant remaking of oneself demands a way of being that is far more akin to a mode of subjectivity that understands the subject as having a degree of control within the social world? How then did any working-class girls succeed at school, where the demands of academic practices were far more similar to

professional ones and therefore necessitated the learning of new forms of subjectivity?

Conclusion

This chapter began by tracing the development of the notion of 'sensitivity' in mothers through the development of attachment theory. It then briefly reviewed the arguments made by Tizard and Hughes in their analysis of the Phase One data from *Project 4:21*. This included the argument that working-class family practices were just as supportive of linguistic development as those of the middle-classes; they were 'equal but different'. Especially important for Tizard and Hughes' argument was the idea that mothers who were sensitive to their daughters' emotional and physical needs would aid their linguistic and intellectual development. However, instances of such sensitivity seemed to be confined to the middle-class mothers of the sample, whilst arguments and wrangling between working-class mothers and daughters were viewed as opportunities for 'social learning'.

In *Democracy in the Kitchen* (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989) which contained a re-analysis of this data, it was argued that through discourses such as 'sensitive mothering', the child-rearing practices of the middle-classes are held up as normal, and that it is against this normative picture that those of the working-classes are considered abnormal. It was argued that mothers are differently regulated through these discourses: middle-class women, as the purveyors of normality, are regulated and come to regulate themselves through love and guilt, whilst working-class mothers, who make power differentials clear and do not value rationality at the expense of other ways of being, have to be policed by educational, social welfare and medical agencies.

Taking illustrative examples from *Democracy in the Kitchen* the chapter demonstrated how gendered and classed subjectivities were carried and constructed through the everyday micro-interactions between mothers and daughters. It challenged the notion that concepts such as exchange value

are learned in an abstract way and instead argued that there is a social element to the production of meaning which varies according to particular circumstances and that those circumstances often involve regulation. It looked at how middle-class mothers worked to produce their daughters as bourgeois liberal democratic citizens through their insistence on rationality and intellectualisation, the turning of difficult emotions into rational discourse and the fostering of autonomy in their daughters through the suppression of power differentials. It argued that working-class practices, in which mothers made their authority clear, drew strong boundaries between work and play, and did not rationalise with their daughters, were entirely appropriate practices for their circumstances.

Many of the themes of this early analysis are taken up and extended in subsequent chapters. For instance, implicit in many educational discourses and much political rhetoric is the idea that middle-class practices in the home are the key to understanding why middle-class children do well at school, and that if working-class families would adopt these practices, then working-class children would also do as well. This is an assumption that is interrogated in Chapter Four when I examine the educational biographies of the working-class and middle-class girls and make links between the early home and school data and data from the last phase of the study. In Chapter Five, which concentrates on some working-class young women who did succeed at school, I consider the individual and family practices and processes that have helped to support their educational attainment. I view those practices, not as pathological or abnormal versions of middle-class ones, but as produced in response to quite different economic, cultural and emotional conditions of everyday life. This chapter also demonstrates that those few working-class girls who did succeed at school, did so in quite different ways from the middle-class girls.

The middle-class girls were encouraged to intellectualise problems and make a rational argument for what they wanted. In interactions where middle-class girls put demands on their mothers, it was not uncommon for their mothers to obscure their authority. This was in line with the child-rearing orthodoxy of the

time, whereby children's autonomy and agency was to be fostered. These are principles that are enshrined in contemporary conceptualisations of the learner and of the citizen. But how realistic is the idea of an powerful, autonomous agency for such middle-class young women who, although immensely successful at school and heading for professional occupations, must still face a labour market where sexism will place severe limits on their ambitions. These are themes that are explored in Chapter Eight in the discussion of the young women's move into paid employment.

In Chapters Four and Six I explore how intellectualisation and the turning of difficult emotions into rational discourse is an important aspect of the middle-class girls' educational success. When the girls were four years old, middle-class mothers blurred work/play boundaries by making every domestic task, every conversation and play activity, an 'opportunity for learning' (Newson and Newson 1976). Most working-class mothers did not do this to anything like the same extent as the middle-class mothers, and instead tended to demarcate and strongly differentiate between work, leisure and learning. In Chapter Four and Six I argue that for the middle-class young women, lack of differentiation between work and play is linked to the constant and 'purposeful' activity they engage in at home and at school (Allatt 1993). In Chapters Four and Five I examine how the work/play dichotomy has remained a salient feature in the organization of the working-class young women's lives and has impacted on their relationship to school work. For the working-class young women who are at university, boundaries between work and play and the abstract concept of exchange value, learned in the context of households where money was always short, continued to shape some of their difficult feelings about being at university – that it was not really work, but play, and guilt that they were using their parents hard-earned money to do so.

In the following chapter I look at what happened to the four and six year old girls as they moved through the education system, to sixteen and twenty-one years old. As well as looking at the normative markers of educational success and failure, I examine how their differential relation to power,

authority, passion, feelings and rationality affected their engagement with learning and the institutions of schooling.

CHAPTER FOUR
EDUCATION BIOGRAPHIES: SUCCESS, FAILURE AND HAPPINESS

Introduction

In this chapter I present the case for the enduring importance of class and its relation to emotions when understanding the educational pathways of the young women who took part in *Project 4:21*. As well as looking at the normative markers of educational success and failure, this chapter aims to highlight the complex ways in which subjective constructions of success and failure in education are produced through a dense web of emotional processes, that are themselves closely tied up with gender and social class.

The chapter begins by examining the educational attainment of the Group A girls at Phase Two when they were ten years old at primary school. Using examples from the data, mismatches between what constitutes success for working-class and middle-class girls and actual attainment are considered. The chapter then moves to Phase Four of the study to look at the shape of the sixteen and twenty-one year olds' educational biographies so far. Differences in examination attainment between the middle-class and working-class girls are highlighted, and patterns across the phases discussed. The discussion then broadens out to consider contemporary debates with regard to gender and class differences in educational performance in Britain. Having mapped the girls' educational pathways, and outlined current research and writing in the area of gender and class inequalities, I then use the case-studies of Kerry, Naomi, Patsy and Julie, as well as other examples from the data to explore the objective and subjective emotional processes through which educational success and failure come to be produced.

Group A - Phase Two: the ten year olds at school

When group A were four years old, each working-class girl was paired with a middle-class girl at the same nursery school. By the age of ten only one of the

original pairs, Julie and Patsy, remained in the same junior school. Five of the middle-class girls now attended fee-paying preparatory schools belonging to the Girls' Public Day School Trust, and four middle-class girls attended other private schools from the age of eleven. By that point, the educational performance of the two groups of ten year olds in maths[1] had diverged significantly. The attainment of all of the working-class girls (and boys and girls in the same year at their school) was poor compared with that of the middle-class girls and their classmates (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989).

Some of the working-class girls were doing well compared with their classmates, they were highly regarded by their teacher and thought well of themselves[2]. They believed themselves to be clever and good at their work and had high expectations for their future educational achievement. It is common for large surveys of attainment (for instance, those commissioned by OFSTED) to ignore data such as the position of the child in class and the teacher's estimate in favour of national comparisons. However, recognising that many working-class girls did well in comparison with their classmates and badly when compared with middle-class pupils gives complexity and depth to ideas about educational performance.

The highest attainment was to be found in the private schools and in those state schools in areas that had a largely professional middle-class intake and were effectively regarded by local middle-class parents, at that time, as state preparatory schools that served to feed the nearby public (i.e. not state) schools.

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[1] An NFER standardised mathematics test was administered to the whole year of each girl in the study.

[2] Each girl was interviewed individually and asked to do a ranking exercise whereby they positioned and gave their opinions about themselves, their classmates and their family members in terms of how 'good' they thought they were at mathematics (see Chapter Three). Their teachers were also interviewed and asked to do the same exercise with that pupil in mind.

Table 1: Standardised maths test scores at ten years old

Rank order of school means[3]

(p) = private

Test Scores	*Middle-class*	*Working-class*
124.48	Emily (p)	
119.08	Samantha (p)	
117.34	Helen	
116.25	Naomi	
115.91	Charlotte (p)	
112.44	Gill	
112.24	Penny	
112.15	Liz	
111.50	Amanda (p)	
108.36		Jacky
108.12		Jenny
106.65		Maureen
106.65		Teresa
104.70		Nicky
104.11		Susan & Katy
102.08	Diana	
101.97	Angela	
101.37		Anna
98.85	Julie	Patsy
96.84		Kerry
94.87		Dawn
92.15		Sally

(Source: Walkerdine and Lucey 1989: 191)

Nicky and Dawn were two working-class girls whose mothers were understood by Tizard and Hughes (1984) as not being adequately sensitive to the child's learning needs and the mother-daughter relationships were judged to be fraught with wrangles and disputes (see Chapter Three). Within Bowlby's (1971) framework of sensitivity these mothers may have been found to be egocentric;

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[3] There are no test results for 6 of the girls: 'Two of the middle-class girls were not available to be included in the follow-up study at [at ten years old]. There were also four occasions when, due to lack of time, the classes could not be given a standardised test' (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989: 222).

the Newsons (1976) may have viewed them as not doing enough to foster autonomy and 'good' feelings in their daughters. We might expect to find the two girls not doing well at school at ten years old. This was not the case, for both girls were doing well within their classes and schools; their teachers evaluated them highly, as did the girls themselves. However, when viewed in relation to the scores of the rest of the sample schools, a different picture emerged. Nicky was ranked by her teacher as among the top in maths, and described as an 'ideal pupil', although her score placed her as average when compared to the rest of the sample. Dawn's position was similarly worrying. She came among the top three in her class in the test, thereby fulfilling the teacher's expectations of her. But in comparison to the rest of the sample, Dawn and her class were doing badly – so badly that the top score for her class was the lowest in the sample at 103, lower than the bottom scores at two of the middle-class girls' schools. It would seem that, despite positive evaluation within the school and within their families, the working-class girls' attainment was poor compared to that of the middle-class girls when measured by the kinds of objective tests that were used then by many local education authorities for secondary school selection at eleven years old (as in the eleven plus exam), and which are still used now in the form of SATs and school selection exams. How do we understand this mis-match? What are the consequences of it for working-class girls who think they are doing well at school but who simply cannot compare or compete with the middle-class girls in terms of examination achievement? It is here that we begin to get the clear impression that educational 'success' is understood very differently by working-class and middle-class families and (at this stage of the research) by teachers in different kinds of schools and, more recently, within government set national standards.

Differences in how success was understood and constituted was an important theme in the educational biographies of the working and middle-class girls and one that I will return to in detail in this chapter and in Chapters Five and Six[4].

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[4] It is important to restate here that the sample is a polarised one in terms of social class and does not provide (possibly competing) perspectives from the various fractions of the working- and middle-classes.

Now, however, I will move to Phase Four of the study, when the girls were sixteen and twenty-one years old, to examine their educational progress so far.

Group A and B - Phase Four: the sixteen and twenty-one year olds

As Table 2 below shows, the majority of working-class girls attended local education authority comprehensives and the majority of middle-class girls attended independent selective schools. This table also highlights how changes in the funding and financial management of schools during the 1980s and 1990s led to diversification within the comprehensive system. While a number of both middle-class and working-class girls attended LEA maintained ('opted out'), grant maintained or voluntary aided comprehensives, we need to be aware of the anomalies and differences within the comprehensive system to be able to make sense of parents' decisions for secondary schooling and the comparative performance of middle and working-class girls in state and 'opted out' comprehensives.

Table 2: Type of school attended (per cent)

Type of school attended	*Working-class*	*Middle-class*
LEA Comp Mixed	61	27
LEA Comp or Sec. Mod. Girls	11	7
Grant or Vol. aided Comp Girls	11	7
Grant or Vol. aided Comp Mixed	17	0
Independent Selective Girls	0	53
Independent Selective Mixed	0	7

The schools that the girls went to that had chosen to become grant maintained and voluntary aided tended to be ex-grammar schools that had placed emphasis on high academic attainment. The Catholic schools in the sample had also taken these options. The Catholic girls who attended them did well but the non-Catholics did poorly. Importantly, the middle-class and working-class girls who attended grant maintained and voluntary aided comprehensive schools tended to attain higher GCSE and A level results

than those in LEA maintained schools. These schools were more selective in their entry requirements, as were a small number of LEA-maintained schools which were prepared to take pupils from outside their catchment area if they had been designated high achieving pupils and showed particular aptitude for a subject the school specialised in. For instance, Hannah, a middle-class sixteen year old, travelled a considerable distance to attend an LEA maintained comprehensive. This school had a well-regarded music department and was allowed to allocate a certain percentage of places to pupils on the basis of their musical ability. For that reason the school attracted a significant number of middle-class pupils who tended to do well in all examinations. Conversely, a minority of working-class girls who had attended LEA maintained schools that performed relatively poorly in terms of national comparison, themselves achieved well by the same comparison. Overall, the girls who attended independent schools held the top twelve positions within our sample in terms of performance at GCSE and A level. By the time the girls were sixteen and twenty-one years old, the trajectories and life paths of the two groups had diverged even further, as can be seen from the tables below.

Table 3: Participation in further and higher education by class

Highest level of education	*Working-class*		*Middle-class*	
	(%)	*(No.)*	*(%)*	*(No.)*
In or completed higher education	22	(4)	93	14
In or completed further education	28	(5)	0	0
Abandoned further education	6	(1)	0	0
Left education at 16 and has not returned yet	44	(8)	7	1
Total	100	(18)	100	15

Table 4: Qualifications of 21 year olds

Highest qualification	*Working-class*		*Middle-class*	
	(%)	*(No.)*	*(%)*	*(No.)*
Post-graduate qualification	6	(1)	13	2
Graduate - degree	11	(2)	67	10
Higher National Certificate	6	(1)	0	0
4 A levels	0	(0)	27	4
3 A levels	17	(3)	47	7
2 A levels	6	(1)	0	0
1 A level	6	(1)	0	0
Studying 2 A levels	6	(1)	0	0
Studying BTEC	6	(1)	0	0
BTEC	0	(0)	7	1
5 + GCSEs grades A-C	44	(8)	73	11
5 + GCSEs grades A-G	17	(3)	7	1
1 + GCSEs grades A-G	6	(1)	7	1

Table 5: Qualifications of 16 year olds

Qualification	*Working-class*		*Middle-class*	
	(%)	*(No.)*	*(%)*	*(No.)*
Studying 3 A levels	0	(0)	100	2
BTEC	50	(3)	0	0
5 + GCSEs grades A-C	33	(2)	100	2
5 + GCSEs grades A-G	33	(2)	0	0
1 + GCSEs grades A-G	17	(1)	0	0
No qualifications	17	(1)	0	0

There was a uniformity of educational achievement within the middle-class sample while the working-class sample were far more diversified in terms of both their educational routes and performance. A pattern was reproduced here from the earlier phases of the research: the performance of even the 'good' (i.e. ranked as good by their teachers) working-class girls at primary

school and later at sixteen and twenty-one was not of the same order of that of the middle-class girls. Even so, it was striking that while all but one of the middle-class girls completed further education and went on to higher education, so few of the working-class girls even approached it.

I now want to consider the wider educational context in which these differences are situated and produced by looking at debates regarding gender and class attainment in the UK.

Girls and boys - progress and panic

Debates about educational performance and gender have shifted dramatically over the last three decades. In the wake of second wave feminism[5] of the 1970s a great deal of concern was expressed about the relative underachievement of girls, especially in maths and science subjects (Sutherland 1983; Whyte 1986). Since then, girls' increased examination success and participation in post-compulsory education has, for some, signalled a 'closing of the gender gap' (Arnot et al 1999). In the mid 1990s however, in an educational context in which girls were now viewed as doing very well and a social and economic context which had undergone profound change, it was boys' newly perceived underachievement which provoked a moral panic (Sammons 1995; Epstein et al. 1998; Lucey and Walkerdine 1999).

The story of boys' underachievement and girls' success as it has emerged during the last decade is a complex one. Arnot, David and Weiner (1999) in their in-depth exploration of gender patterns in education concluded that girls have made major strides in reducing the overall lead of boys in assessments and examinations. For instance, in 1995 the number of girls achieving five or more A* to C grades at GCSE stood at 48 per cent of girls compared with 39 percent of boys (Arnot et al 1999: 15). At A/AS level, girls have continued to do as well and in some cases better than boys; a trend that has had a knock-on effect on the proportion of girls staying in education after they are 18. Slightly

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[5] As opposed to the 'first wave' of feminist who campaigned for women's legal and political rights around the turn of the twentieth century.

more girls than boys now take up training and further education courses and enter higher education. Arnot *et al* identify girls' consistent and continuing advantage in English and their improvement in maths and science as the two main factors in the progress of girls over the last 10 years (Equal Opportunities Committee/Ofsted 1996; Arnot et al 1998). Explanations for this disparity are various but tend to involve facets of the concept of 'feminisation'. The feminised environment of the primary school is seen to be problematic for boys (Shaw 1995) and there are suggestions that this can result in the formation of damaging attitudes towards English in adolescence (Ofsted 1993; Millard 1997). Not only this, but just as science was previously thought of as a male subject, literacy and English are regarded as 'naturally' female, requiring practices in the classroom, such as introspection, empathy, self-disclosure and the creative description of emotions - all of which are perceived to be more suited to girls' than boys' constructions of gender (Davies 1993).

Girls have not only maintained their advantage in English, but by 1995 they had almost caught up with boys in mathematics and science. However, despite girls getting off to a good start in primary school, boys' advantage in these subjects is evident at age 11 and continues onto GCSE and A/AS level in both numbers entered and grades achieved (Arnot et al 1999). In their research Arnot et al identify the introduction of the National Curriculum (with its set of compulsory subjects) and the GCSE as playing a 'key role in reducing the sex segregation of subjects up to the age of sixteen' (1999: 18). Once subject choice is in the hands of the student however, then they tend to choose gender-typed subjects and courses, with young women more likely to choose arts and humanities courses and young men to choose science and technical courses at degree and A level. These trends have an on-going influence on the kinds of jobs which young men and women take up and help produce a highly gendered labour impact (Furlong and Cartmel 1997).

Class differences

It is important to highlight the gains made by girls in education, not least because they have been, and continue to be, hard fought for by feminists,

educationalists and girls and young women themselves. But there is a danger that concentrating on gender differences may help to suppress deep and enduring class differences between boys and girls. Arnot et al (1999) stress that social class remains a 'key factor' in educational success and that 'Gender differences appeared narrowest where students have the greatest cultural and material advantages and sharpest where their parents were more socially disadvantaged' (1999: 28). Ofsted data shows that schools in deprived areas do worse in inspections than those in better-off areas and failing primary schools are overwhelmingly in areas where poverty levels are high. Other research demonstrates that social class inequalities in education remain substantial and persistent, not only in the United Kingdom (Hillman and Pearce 1998), but across Europe (Muller and Karle 1993; Shavit and Blossfeld 1993). Gillian Plummer (2000) states categorically that the educational failure of working-class girls is hidden through an interpretation of statistics whereby middle-class girls' rise in achievement is extrapolated to mean all girls and that a different examination of the available data reveals that the gender gap is nowhere near as severe as the class gap.

Changing patterns of schooling and the introduction of new forms of credentials and vocational courses since the late 1970s have had a significant impact on the qualification profiles of school leavers. In 1970, 44 per cent of pupils left school without any graded exams (prior to 1972 many left school at fifteen without even having sat any exams). By 1991, unqualified school leavers made up only 6 per cent of the sixteen year old cohort. Despite the rapid overall increases in GCSE qualifications, the gap between different social groups is widening (Sammons 1995). At the same time as credentials have gone up, there are still grave concerns about the number of young adults leaving school with only a poor grasp of literacy and numeracy (Bynner and Steedman 1995). Vocational options have grown but are largely taken up by working-class pupils in lower attainment bands while leaving intact the traditional academic curriculum followed by middle-class pupils (Altrichter and Elliott 2000).What is also clear is that the effects of social class can also shape the patterns of performance of different groups of pupils categorised by ethnicity (Gillborn and Gipps 1996; Gaine and George 1999).

Post-compulsory education

There have been dramatic increases in the last twenty years in the number of young people who stay on in education beyond the minimum school-leaving age of sixteen years. Where previously the main pattern for working-class children was to leave education at the minimum school leaving age, now far fewer leave school at sixteen and most of those who do leave school at sixteen years continue to receive formal education or training on a part time or block release basis (Furlong 1992). In 1973/74 approximately 33 per cent of sixteen year old males and 37 per cent of females were in full time education (Furlong and Cartmel 1997). More working-class girls than boys had traditionally stayed on at school and this difference remained into the 1990's: in 1993/94 70 per cent of boys and 76 per cent of girls were in full-time education. But despite the increase in post-compulsory education, participation rates are still low and education underfunded in comparison to many other developed countries (Forsyth and Furlong 2000; Geuna and Martin 2003). Furthermore comparative research shows that, when compared to other countries, England has a greater proportion of low achieving pupils and a wider distribution of achievement (Reynolds and Farrell 1996; Reynolds et al 2002).

Higher Education

The expansion of universities since the 1960s as well as the restructuring of higher education in the 1990s has had an effect on working-class people's participation in higher education. Once the domain of a small minority, university has become part of the educational experience of a growing number. Since the post-war period, women's participation has steadily increased so that their numbers are equal to men's (Reay et al 2001). In fact, one of the biggest changes in higher education has been its take-up by women. In the 1960s higher education was male-dominated with women tending to be steered towards teacher-training colleges (Crompton 1993). However, class inequalities persist with little change over the years in the proportion of entrants to higher education who come from working-class families (Archer et al 2003; Reay et al

2004). Older, more prestigious universities are still the preserve of the children of managers and professionals and overall, the biggest increases in participation have been amongst the middle-classes, not the working-classes (Egerton and Halsey 1993). Plummer (2000) reports that in 1998 women in Social Class V got 1.6 per cent of places at university (boys from same class got 2 per cent), a rise of 0.4 per cent over 10 years. Furlong and Cartmel state that 'Despite an apparent increase in the possibilities to continue full-time education or embark on a course of training, young people from advantaged positions in the socio-economic hierarchy have been relatively successful in protecting privileged access to the most desirable routes' (1997: 34; also see Archer et al 2003).

How was it that such homogeneity of success was achieved by one group while the other took such diverse routes and most, but not all, had a comparatively poor educational record, especially as higher education had supposedly been opened up to make it more accessible to such young working-class women (Ainley 1993; Smithers and Robinson 1995)? In order to cast light on these questions the following sections concentrate on four of the twenty-one year old young women (as well as referring to other girls and young women in the sample) who were originally 'paired' when they were four years old and took part in Phase One of the study. These are working-class Kerry and Patsy, who were paired respectively with middle-class Naomi and Julie.

Kerry and Naomi

Kerry is a white working-class twenty-one year old who did not do well at primary school, where her teacher described her as 'slow' and of 'low ability'. Her poor performance was understood within a developmental discourse, as someone who tried hard, but did not get anywhere, because she was simply slow and lacking ability. At ten her teacher described her as a 'nice little girl, who just isn't very good'. Not only was she having problems keeping up with her classmates in school; in addition her class teacher felt that she had problems communicating with other children, problems produced out of knowing that she was not as able as the others.

Kerry went onto a local co-ed comprehensive, which she left when she was sixteen. She took eight subjects at GCSE, but gained mostly E and F grades and did not achieve the government's definition of 'exam success' at GCSE which is set at 5 subject passes between grades A to C. In her interviews she recalled school as an unhappy experience from the beginning: she always found the work difficult and was chronically bullied by one of her peers. However she never reported the bullying to anyone, including her parents, who were unaware of the situation until she attempted suicide at the age of fifteen.

Kerry and her family felt that Kerry's struggles with school work and the mystery of why she found learning so difficult were made clear when she was positively tested as dyslexic after she left school. By this time, however, she had found herself a job in an office, had learned valuable IT skills and proved herself to be very capable. She was highly regarded at work and received promotion and bonuses for her efforts. At the time of the interviews she was saving so that she could go travelling around Europe (Walkerdine et al 2001: 121).

Naomi is a white twenty-one year old from a professional middle-class family. At four Naomi was described by her nursery school teacher as a 'confident, bright child'. At five years old she went to a private preparatory school. At ten, although her performance in school was high, she expressed anxiety about that performance, saying that 'she didn't work hard enough'. Naomi's teacher at ten described her as a child who 'constantly strives for perfection, but never quite gets there'. At ten years old Naomi was achieving well. More than this, she was achieving the standard expected of her in a primary school in which one of the main objectives was to ensure a high rate of transfer amongst its fee paying pupils to public secondary schools. To this end the school, like many other of the primary schools attended by the middle-class girls, adopted the practice of regular testing in the classroom, in order to prepare the children for the public schools selection exams (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989: 193). Naomi, although an 'over-anxious perfectionist' in the words of her teacher, was nevertheless on target.

From eleven to eighteen years old she attended a well known and high achieving public school. She continued to do extremely well at this school but, at around the age of fourteen, what her parents described as characteristics of Naomi's 'sensitivity' and 'highly strung' nature began to topple over into extreme anxieties. She began to have long episodes of crying, suffered from insomnia, started to obsessively pull her hair out and developed bulimia. Through all of this she maintained her school attainment and achieved 10 grade A GCSEs. She went onto the sixth form of the school and got 3 As at A level. At twenty-one she was doing a degree in Fine Art at one of the most prestigious universities in the UK.

At eighteen, after leaving school, Naomi decided that she needed a break from her studies and so, with the money from an inheritance left to her by her grandfather, spent a year in Italy studying the language and painting. At the time of the interviews at twenty-one Naomi was not sure what she would do when she completed her degree, but was considering going on to do a Masters degree. She continued to pull her hair out, worry obsessively about her weight and sometimes returned home during term time in a state of abject despair and panic (Walkerdine et al 2001: 121-122).

Just as Naomi's childhood anxieties did not seem to effect her high performance at primary school, so her adolescent problems did not dent the excellent performance she continued to produce. Naomi's mother noted that these problems, although evident, went uncommented on by her secondary school, 'because as far as they [the school] were concerned, Naomi was not a problem' (Naomi's mother). Naomi herself felt that the only thing the school was concerned about was that she should maintain her high levels of achievement.

> Because my school was totally into Oxbridge, and it just seemed to me that they wanted statistics, and I always fought against that. I didn't want to be one of their statistics. And then of course, I end up, I end up going there.

Naomi's interviews contained many themes, but a powerfully recurring one was the pressure to succeed in a school and social environment where educational success was the norm.

> I think that's the sort of school it was really, that it was very pushy and academic and it was never enough, you never did enough, or it was never good enough. You know, you could get 10 As at your GCSEs, but it wasn't you know, there was no one whoever said 'well done'. You don't expect it.

However, Naomi was continually anxious about whether or not she was doing the required amount of work:

> Because I always worked very hard, and I always did lots of it, so I either did too much and I didn't really need to, or I just got very worried that I wasn't doing enough. That I wasn't doing it, sort of, really intensively or intensely.

The maintenance of such high attainment levels took its toll on Naomi, emotionally and physically. She remembered herself being 'unconfident', 'completely drained' and in an emotional 'state' after her A levels.

> I used to have such a poor self opinion- such a low self opinion of myself and I'd always just you know when I was at the last few years of school and I really did make a mess of myself really. I just sort of you know I pulled all my hair out at one point.

Although noting that the school did not involve itself in Naomi's emotional difficulties, her parents accepted this as appropriate and did not feel that the school had any part to play in providing any 'help' for Naomi in this area. Instead they tended to suppress knowledge of the extent of her emotional distress from the school. When they did seek help, they went 'private' and took Naomi first of all to a behavioural psychologist and then a psychiatrist.

In contrast, Kerry was struggling to keep up with the academic level of her peers by the time she went to secondary school. Her mother felt that Kerry had specific learning difficulties which the school was ignoring; she herself was dyslexic as were other family members. She approached the school but the teacher assured her that they had 'tested' Kerry and this had shown that she was not dyslexic. The only explanation left was that indeed, as her primary teacher said, she was of low ability. Kerry's learning problems followed her throughout secondary school.

Kerry also suffered long-term physical and emotional bullying by a girl in her year. Despite an increasing awareness of issues around bullying at school during the late 1980s and 1990s, institutional and social discourses and practices in relation to bullying could still have a profoundly silencing effect on victims of bullying (Tattum and Herbert 1997). Attempts by Kerry to raise the problem with teachers were problematic:

> I used to go the headmaster with bruises or cuts or whatever (...) they never did anything.

Like many such victims Kerry's fury around her treatment by her bullies was complexly intertwined with conscious and unconscious feelings of low self-worth, all of which combined to prevent her from finding a way to articulate her growing despair either to herself or others. The feeling that her daily experience of bullying was a deeply shameful secret, indicative of her failure, eventually broke down and when she was fifteen, Kerry finally told her parents some of what was happening at school.

> Because I got to that stage where I couldn't handle it anymore and then my mum and dad went down the school and they wouldn't do anything about it and that's why I didn't go into the sixth form because she [the bully] was going to be staying on so I didn't really see any point in carrying on doing that because I wouldn't have done very well.

The silence that surrounded not only her difficulties with learning but also the daily humiliation and fear that her bullies subjected her to eventually produced a suicidal despair and Kerry took a barbiturate overdose. Ironically, it was only then that she received any help, and this took the form of being admitted to a psychiatric ward.

Issues around resources and power resonate throughout as we look more closely at how these two girls' various mental health problems were viewed and dealt with by the parents and schools. Here we have two young women who experienced deep levels of anxiety, distress and despair. For both of them, this is in part related to their educational performance. However, these 'problems' have been produced and understood discursively in different ways. Kerry's problems, within an educational discourse which centrally retains notions of working-class 'lack' (despite competing theoretical discourses to the contrary),

can only, in the end, be *her* problems. She simply is understood as not having the ability to do well in school-work, or in relationships with her peers. The emotional effectivities of being positioned within a discourse of deficit were hidden, emerging only as further evidence of her lack - as in her suicide attempt. The problem for Naomi was not one of lack of ability – her educational performance had consistently been excellent. However, I would argue that she nevertheless held considerable anxieties about that performance not being good enough, precisely because she was growing up within a social context in which excellent performance was an everyday expectation and where anything that even looked like failure could not be tolerated. This is an argument that is developed further in Chapter Six when I concentrate on the middle-class girls across the sample.

It is difficult to talk about success and failure in relation to these two young women, when what counts as success in educational terms differs so much between them. Within current educational discourses that emphasise examination attainment as the only measure of success, Kerry had failed and Naomi was successful. But just as school had given up on Kerry and she had nearly given up on herself, something else came through.

> And then when I was sixteen I found out that I was dyslexic. After I left school. (...)Now I know what my problems are I know what to do. (...) Now I can say to someone what I am. It's not that I'm just stupid. I'm not stupid. I just find difficulty to put it down in words. So that's why my job is quite easy because I don't actually write anything down on paper. It's all on computer.

> As soon as I left school I picked up some really good friends and I got more confident with myself and I thought well, no I'm not... I wouldn't let anyone do that to me now. (...)I mean now people are more open about it and they know there's a problem whereas when I was at school they knew what was happening they just didn't care.

She faced her bully and left school. She found that she did have ability after all, and that she could make friends and earn the respect of colleagues through her competence at work. So the positioning of Kerry circulates around two competing narratives: the schools narrative that focuses on her low ability versus the parents' alternative discourse of dyslexia. It was through that alternative that they had been able to maintain some sense of self respect. All

the time she was in school the school's discourse and explanatory framework retained dominance, but the moment she left school, the school's discourse was not the only one in which she was positioned and she was able to achieve success in a job she was good at.

Naomi had an expensive and privileged education and yet she felt strongly that in some crucial respects it failed her.

> Because I got very, sort of, critical of the whole sort of system of sort of. I mean, I was alright in a certain sense, 'cos I was conscientious, so people would always be nice to me. But I had friends who, you know, they weren't that interested in working. I mean, they were perfectly bright, but they, you know, a very good friend of mine, but she was just ignored. And she was always put in that category 'well we just don't bother about her really'. And so she left, having absolutely no confidence. And a lot of people did, all these very bright girls left having no confidence, all having got really good results or whatever. But then that means nothing and I think you know if you go to school, which doesn't really give you a belief in yourself, or any sort of confidence, then I think it's failed in a way.

At twenty-one she appeared to be a confident, outgoing, autonomous and successful young woman and yet she was racked by private fears of not working hard enough and of not being good enough. Naomi was also attempting to work in a different way with her anxieties so that they did not overwhelm her as often or for such long periods. She was trying not to work so hard or compulsively on making her art at university, and to give herself some time off.

These two cases also highlight some crucial issues about educational achievement which relate to the whole group. Firstly, at ten years old, it was more common for teachers to attribute poor performance to a lack of ability in the working-class girls, while the few cases where middle-class girls were achieving the same levels, this was far more likely to be viewed not as evidence of any lack in innate ability, but rather as a problem of motivation (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989). This is a theme that is illustrated further through the examples of Patsy and Julie below.

Patsy and Julie

Patsy, white working-class, and Julie, white middle-class, were the only two girls who at ten were in their original 'pair' from the Group A Phase One four year old study and attended the same, mainly working-class primary school. Both their mothers could be deemed 'sensitive' (Tizard and Hughes 1984; Walkerdine and Lucey 1989), although Julie expressed a furious envy of her younger sister, and both Julie and Patsy wanted to remain 'babies'. Table 1 (pXX) shows that both girls were doing equally badly in mathematics at junior school. However, their performance was understood in quite different ways by their teacher. Julie was described in the same ways as boys tended to be, as having a 'natural ability' even though her performance at school did not indicate this. Patsy, who had high a IQ score at four (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989), at ten was seen by her teacher as 'nowhere near as bright as the rest of them', very babyish and anxious. Like many of the poorly attaining working-class girls she was viewed as unconfident and 'too sensitive' by teachers. All of these girls, including Kerry and Patsy, reported victimisation, and divided their worlds starkly into those who 'helped' them and those who hit, kicked, punched, pinched and bullied them. At ten, Patsy hid under the desk when she could not do the work, or to escape from class-mates. Meanwhile, Julie's problems with school work were wholly attributed to a lack of 'motivation': the teacher spoke of herself and Julie's parents 'bending over backwards' to get her interested in maths, all to no avail. These different designations are important when looking at the same girls at twenty-one. Julie's lack of motivation seemed to take on momentum rather than be overcome as she got older; she was one of the few middle-class girls to achieve poor GCSE results and not follow a straightforward educational path. What is important however is that Julie, despite poor results and emotionally turbulent teenage years, did go to university and was set for a professional career in fashion (Walkerdine et al 2001: 125).

Patsy's mother was involved in work with teachers to help Patsy improve her performance, but she left school at sixteen with very few qualifications and at Phase Four worked part-time in a job that she enjoyed, but which was poorly paid and insecure. The point I am making here is that, despite sensitive

mothering and parents who did the 'right thing', two girls who went to the same nursery, infant and junior schools, neither of whom did at all well in national examinations, are now worlds apart. In spite of their parallel educational histories up until GCSE, they have managed to reproduce their class-specific educational pictures. Julie finally came back on track and was heading to become a graduate professional while Patsy, painfully aware of her lack of qualifications, will just as likely remain in relatively poorly paid, low status work. It is salutary to understand that Julie was categorically not doing better than Patsy, but that it was the differences in ability ascribed to each by virtue of their class position that helped produce such stark differences in educational trajectory and attainment.

The cases of Naomi and Kerry, and Julie and Patsy point up some of the differences in the relationships that middle-class and working-class parents have to the education system and the schools their children attend. Below I use these examples and other examples from the data to explore this further.

Parents Differing Relationships To Schools And Schooling

Fighting for your child

What came through strongly in the girls' and parents' narratives, as with Kerry's mother, was that working-class parents were often positioned within a professional discourse which located them as 'not knowing' and the teacher as a powerful authority. Thus Kerry's mother deferred to the teachers' assertion to 'know' that Kerry was not dyslexic, despite her strong internal knowledge and access to another set of discourses and the family history around dyslexia.

Of course it could be asked, why did this mother not 'fight' for her child? Why could she not 'demand' that something be done? It is worth noting here that experiences of failure in education was the norm for the working-class parents. The majority of the working-class parents left school at fifteen without any qualifications. Jacky's mother said of school that ' I walked out as I walked in -

with nothing (laughs). Nothing at all'. Many, but not all, working-class parents had negative experiences of school, in particular, secondary school.

> I literally hated school. The only time I, I liked school was, er, on Games Day. (...) I think there were so many in the classes, you didn't get the attention, er, and when you did ask questions you were sort of shouted down. (...) I hated it. I mean I did hate school. (...) There's no getting away from it.
> Jacky's father.

> When I was at school I was (pause) I thought that I was really thick and stupid and em (pause) I left school as soon as I could, honestly.
> Kerry's mother

I would suggest that 'fighting' for your child was something that the middle-class parents were far better emotionally and materially resourced and discursively positioned to do. I would suggest that for many working-class parents the anxieties, frustration and sense of powerlessness which they expressed around the discursively produced space of 'the school' had deep and profound roots in their own schooldays. Reay (1998a) in her study of working-class and middle-class mothers interactions and relationships with their children's primary schools notes that working-class mothers have to negotiate difficult issues of difference which middle-class mothers do not have to go through when dealing with schools. Nicky's mother found it difficult to take up teacher's invitations to help out at her daughters' primary school:

> because I didn't understand a lot of it to be honest. I'm the thick one in the family (laughs). I found it very intimidating.

Annette Lareau (1989) also concludes from the findings of her home-school relations study in the United States that they are characterised by separateness for working-class parents and inter-connectedness for middle-class parents. Both Reay and Lareau used Bourdieu's conceptualisation of 'capital' and 'habitus' to understand the different social spaces which middle-class and working-class children and families occupy. For instance the working-class parents in Reay's and Lareau's studies had no social access to teachers or professional educators, a separation of home and school that is linked to cultural and social capital. In contrast, middle-class parents had the appropriate

kinds of cultural and social capital which they exploited on their children's behalf.

For working-class parents, particularly mothers, who are still the ones most directly involved with their children's schooling, this separation and distance may not be felt to be that much of a problem: it may even keep them at a safe and generally passive distance from the school. Until, that is, things go wrong. Parents who, because of their experiences of educational failure, are unconfident about their own intellectual ability and may find it difficult to make the kinds of demands and in the manner in which middle-class parents do. A persistent theme in the working-class parents' narratives is of perceived impotence in the face of what they view as the teacher's authority. Kerry's mother said:

> And I said I'm sure Kerry is dyslexic. Em... and he said, oh, I've done a so and so test on her and she's not dyslexic. And that was just dismissed out of hand (...) So I thought, well, he must know what he's talking about, he's a teacher. Ha, ha, ha. So I didn't do anything about it. So she went through um, the first and middle school and she... she did have difficulties and then she went on to the comprehensive school and she still has em... the difficulties around the spelling.

At the same time, interviews with middle-class parents clearly demonstrated that their powers in negotiating with the school around 'academic' issues was considerable. Bratlinger et al found that middle-class mothers were more likely to complain than working-class mothers should they perceive there to be a problem with the 'service' the school was providing (1996). In a small study of gender and literacy in primary school[6], teachers in schools with a significant intake from professional middle-class families spoke of the pressure they felt from parents to produce high attainment in their children (Lucey and Walkerdine 1999). Samantha's father, a middle-class professional, along with other parents, petitioned his daughter's public school to dismiss a teacher whom parents deemed to be inadequate.

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[6] Lewisham LEA funded project 1997.

> There was one teacher, her geography teacher who was really pretty hopeless (....) if there's enough parental pressure, then they'll get pushed out, and one had a bit of a conscience about that. But still you can't really tolerate people that are second rate.
> Samantha's father

Working-class mothers like Kerry's and Patsy's did try to negotiate and overcome the kinds of emotional barriers that their own experiences had helped to construct, but lacked the certainty of their entitlement that the middle-class women seemed to have (Reay 1998a: p58). In relation to mothers' involvement with their children's primary schools Reay argues that cultural capital enters the process of raising issues with teachers at many points: it was middle-class women's confidence, their self-presentation as entitled, the certain conviction that their point of view was the correct one and their clearly-articulated knowledge of the system and how it worked, that counted (Reay 1998a: 113). It is important to remember that neither the middle-class nor working-class families of the study are homogeneous groupings and therefore there is diversity in middle-class and working-class parents relationships with their children's school (Vincent 1996). Nevertheless, evidence suggests that while continuity and recognition characterise home-school and teacher-parent interaction for the middle-classes (Vincent op cit; Reay op cit), parental involvement of the working-class parents is premised on the notion that teachers must help working-class white and black mothers to support their children in the right ways (Walkerdine and Lucey 1999). On an everyday, mundane level this different discursive positioning can be experienced by working-class parents as an infantilisation. Being treated as if they were children themselves (Vincent 1996: 96) and being fobbed off by teachers when they try to get detailed information about their child's progress (Reay 1998a) can contribute towards the construction of a deeply unsatisfying dynamic for everyone concerned.

But the contradictory positioning of teachers must always be kept in mind; some of the strategies that teachers employ in dealing with working-class parents are produced as a response to teachers own ensnared position (Walkerdine 1998). While the meritocratic fiction persists that everyone, if only they work hard at

school will do well, teachers are often painfully aware that there are no quick-fix, pedagogic solutions to the inequalities which shape their pupils' educational and life chances. The impossible task of holding, being responsible for and reproducing that fiction can 'cause teachers to be caught up in a dance of denial over which they (have) little control' (Reay 1998a: 124).[7]

While one set of defensive strategies employed by working-class parents in home-school interactions were characterised by silence, withdrawal or compliance; others mobilised feelings which allowed for the possibility of a different set of actions. However, working-class parents who did insist on voicing their concerns over their children's education were in danger of being viewed as demanding and unreasonable by the school. As a response to feelings of inadequacy and unfairness, coupled with a prolonged sense of not being heard, it was not surprising that some parents' attempts to defend against those feelings became manifest in an angry way. Zoe is a white working-class sixteen year old. Her mother said:

> (...) she'd hate parents evenings, she'd say "don't come", because we always ended up having an argument...or I'd start shouting at somebody (laughs). I'd start having a row. It doesn't do any good, does it (laughs).

The routes through which anger can be expressed depend upon how the individual is located discursively: this positioning impacts upon the power and effectivity of their response. Zoe's mother's was understood as stroppy and aggressive. Sharon's father tried to 'fight' for his children, but he too was viewed as aggressive[8]. Zoe's mother also invoked the shame of her daughter, for by showing her anger in this public way she called into question her and Zoe's respectability which, as Skeggs states is one of the most ubiquitous signifiers of class, with particular power to place, define and pathologise working-class women (1997a). For Samantha's father, a white middle-class man who was heavily invested with both respectability and its close companion, rationality,

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[7] In order to become teachers, they too have to be produced within the same discourses which pathologise working-class parents, whatever their own original social location.

[8] The construction of fighting as an aspect of working-class masculinity is explored in Walkerdine (1986).

anger and aggression could be materialised in ways that would not be understood as pathological. Forcibly putting pressure on his daughter's head teacher to sack a member of staff is, I suggest, an intensely aggressive act. But the structural, social and cultural networks in which he is positioned legitimised an anger which on an individual level shared much with that of Zoe's mother - anxiety over his daughter's academic attainment.

When discussing anxiety in this chapter I have tended to focus on the place and production of anxiety amongst the middle-class girls and their families in relation to fears of educational failure. Of course, anxiety about failure is not the sole province of the middle-classes. However, I would argue that, just as anxieties in relation to schooling had a different provenance in the working-class girls and their families, so their shape, expression and effect were different. In the following section I examine how 'happiness' entered as a construct for working-class parents in relation to their anxieties about their own and their children's failure.

Constructions and Functions of Happiness

Across the phases of the research, a pattern emerged in the working-class parents' interviews of stressing the role of 'happiness' in their daughters' educational experience. I would argue that for some working-class parents this was a response to extremely difficult but often unconscious feelings around their own unhappiness and failure at school. Teachers often express genuine puzzlement in relation to parents who seem to set and accept low standards for their children and appear satisfied that their child is 'happy' at school, despite the child's poor performance (David et al 1994; Reay 1998b). This is sometimes understood by teachers as parents simply not being interested in their child's progress although disinterest is far from what emerged from my interviews with working-class parents (Lucey and Walkerdine 1999).

In some crucial ways (as described in detail in Chapter Two) my analysis of the girls' educational experiences and their relationship to the production of their subjectivity drew, in part, on my (and the other research team members')

experience of school. We came from working-class families where to get good reports, be described as 'bright', be put in for selective examinations, pass national examinations and to stay on at school past fifteen or sixteen (never mind go to university) was quite out of the ordinary. In many ways it was beyond the comprehension of our parents who struggled to understand and support these 'clever' children while we ourselves were struggling with a system entirely unfamiliar to those who loved us best. All they wanted was for us to be happy, as happiness was the most they could envisage in an educational system which had only brought them failure and in some cases unhappiness (Walkerdine et al 2001: 131). It was the kind of examination of the interviews which I described in Chapter Two that brought these things to the fore in the analysis, not just in the last stage of the research but in the earlier phases too. For there it was, many working-class parents *did* express more concern about their child's happiness than their performance at school, even when they were failing badly.

There is a double-bind in which the emphasis on happiness can place working-class girls and their families. Zoe is a white working-class girl from the Group B sample. At six years old her parents were praised by her teacher for their 'laid back attitude' and for being more concerned with her happiness than in 'pushing her' with her school work. Within a child-centred framework, making performance demands of children of this age could create the danger of producing 'anxiety', and only 'happy' working-class children who were less bothered about work were 'well-adjusted' (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989). Christine was another white working-class girl from the Group B sample (all of this group went to the same primary school). Her parents' model of educational support such as educational visits to museums and zoos every weekend was thought by her teacher to be too self-conscious to produce the right kind of orientation to learning or the right kind of knowledge. By comparison Hannah, also in the same school as Zoe and Christine at six and from a professional middle-class family, was seen as both 'well-adjusted' *and* doing well because her parents did not display anxiety or appear (to the school) to push her (Walkerdine and the Girls and Mathematics Unit 1989, p.91). In fact, as Hannah said when she was sixteen, she was expected to work very hard at school and was also expected to learn to play the piano and violin to an high standard. This

was evident in home recordings when she was six, in which she argued with her father about the violin practice regime he insisted she follow (Walkerdine et al 2001).

It is a central assertion of this thesis that psycho-dynamics within the family are a critical part of the matrix in which children develop their educational subjectivities. In working-class Zoe's case, the family were socially positioned in a way that produced, for her parents, educational failure. I suggest that Zoe's parents' own anxieties in relation to schooling had resurfaced as their children went to primary school. Alongside the emergence of these anxieties was an intense desire to resolve these difficulties. The ethos of child-centredness which Zoe's primary school embraced provided a framework in which to insert happiness as a strategy for ameliorating her parents' unresolved unhappiness in relation to their own schooling experiences. It is important to note that, in this primary setting, the organisation of such psycho-dynamic defences against the anxieties that were aroused in her parents worked to good effect, or at least in the school's terms. These defences may not have been effective in producing Zoe as an academically successful child, but they did function to prevent conflict with the school - not an unimportant issue for working-class parents (see Lareau 1989; Vincent 1996; Reay 1998a). However, the move from primary to secondary schooling signals a shift, not only in children's identifications but also into an educational system where the nurturant family ethos which characterises primary schools is replaced by the more impersonal and fragmented regime of secondary schools (Shaw 1995). Moreover, in 1984, testing was not a central part of the primary curriculum in the way that it became in the 1990s. For girls like Zoe, an emphasis on measured performance was something they were to encounter most dramatically when they went to secondary school. It is in this arena, where the curricular focus is very much on examination performance, that an emphasis on the child's happiness can be seriously at odds with the demands of the curriculum.

At sixteen Zoe still maintained a 'laid-back' attitude towards school, but her prospects for GCSE success did not look good. She was certainly happy at school, although for her the social aspects seemed more important than doing

well academically. Changes on a social level, namely the disappearance of a youth labour market (Bynner et al 1997), increased pressure for young people to stay on at school until they are eighteen years old (Hodkinson 1996; Cohen 1997) and contracting opportunities for uncredentialled youngsters and older workers had their effect on her parents responses to what was becoming clear would be Zoe's lack of examination success at school. Differences emerged between her parents in terms of their reaction to this changing situation and their daughter's education. While they were both clear about the need for her to get some qualifications, for her father this conflicted with other conscious and unconscious desires; the conscious desire not to produce anxiety in her, and, I suggest, the unconscious desire not to produce it in himself:

> I didn't want to lock her up in her room, so she got home from school and worked you know. Work, work, work, you know. I didn't want to do that. Just that when she was at school, pay attention, you know. (...) I just wanted her to be happy, that's all. She's not, er, ambitious. And I'm not ambitious(laughs) that's it. Willing to let things just float along.

Zoe's identification as 'laid back' may be only one side of the story. It would be too easy to say that Zoe did not care about education; she was full of good intentions. However, she was unable to sustain the energy and motivation required to produce the kind of course work or performance in examination needed for school success. Her comments at the second interview, after she had left school at seventeen to have a baby, also exposed the more defensive aspects of her outwardly relaxed persona; in retrospect she was able to articulate the possibility that this dreamy, happy-go-lucky persona also contained a defence against her anxieties about being stupid and of failing.

> I wasn't confident enough to ask for help. I was like, "Oh, em.. they're going to think I'm stupid, they're going to think I've got to know this." I mean now I do look back and think why was I such a silly fool. If I didn't know it I didn't know it. You know, that's it, that's the way it goes. I mean, I'm not stupid and you know nobody's really stupid (...) Because em, I've realised that em, before I used to sit down and you know let it fly by me.

Zoe's story also highlights how ambivalent feelings about education and achievement are expressed in the family by various members and how these can have a powerful effect when communicated to children. While her father took up and maintained the position as the 'laid back' one, her mother who has

a reputation in the family as 'a very determined woman', who could be 'stroppy' when crossed, was keen for their children to do well. She had tried to encourage them by example; she went on a computing course and studied English and Maths at GCSE because she had never done any O levels or GCSEs, and 'I thought it would be nice to see what it involves really'.

One of things that differentiates parental practice is the degree to which middle-class parents were prepared to 'push' their children in order for them to achieve and maintain high academic performance. I would argue that for the parents of children who were not doing very well and who themselves had poor experiences of school, it was very difficult to push their child and distressing to hear that their child may be finding school work difficult. Parents wanted to protect their children from these difficult feelings and preserve their childhood as a time of happiness and freedom from worry and expectation. I do not dispute that middle-class parents also stress 'happiness' for their children; when asked 'What would you like for your daughter's future?' nearly all parents began with a version of 'for her to be happy'. I do assert nevertheless, that happiness itself was differently constituted for the working and middle-class girls (David et al 1994; Reay 1998b).

When the middle-class girls of Group A were four years old, their mothers pushed them in order that they discover the joys of 'learning' so that play and work became indistinguishable (see Chapter Three). By the time they were ten, the joy of learning was no longer enough and quantifiable 'achievement' was firmly on the agenda. In this way, the set of practices through which above average educational attainment was achieved became precisely those practices through which to recognise, achieve and express 'happiness'. For the middle-class families then, 'happiness' was incontrovertibly fused with academic success in a way in which it was not for most of the working-class families. What I want to stress however, is the enormous emotional, practical and economic task of ensuring that such happiness comes about. Furthermore, I have already raised the possibility, through the example of Naomi, that such intense and unrelenting labour may have unforeseen costs. In Barbara Ehrenreich's insightful analysis of the American professional middle-classes,

she argues that middle-class childrearing practices are characterised by ambivalence and anxiety:

> Middle-class parents face a particular dilemma. On the one hand they must encourage their children to be innovative and to express themselves (...) But the child will never gain entry to a profession in the first place without developing a quite different set of traits, centred on self-discipline and control. The challenge of middle-class childraising - almost the entire point of it, in fact - is to inculcate what the reader will recognise as the deferred gratification pattern. It is this habit of mind that supposedly distinguishes the middle-class from the poor; and it is this talent for deferral that a middle-class child actually needs in order to endure his or her long period of education and apprenticeship (1990: 84).

Pat Allatt (1993) discusses the critical 'domestic transition' (Bourdieu 1984) whereby privilege is not automatically transmitted, but depends upon *constant and purposeful activity* in the family directed towards the maintenance of class position and the prevention of downward mobility. Naomi says

> My father's very, um, well it's not a criticism, it's just he's very energetic and he's always on the go. He's always doing things and he works really hard. And he's always like this, and my mum also, she works really, really hard, but in a different way, in a quieter way. So people are really always on the go here. And you know, there's a lot of sort of tension, not tension a bad sort of tension, but just sort of active, sort of, you know 'we're not going to sit down'. My mum's, like up and doing things, and she doesn't sit down until about midnight. And my dad's sort of in and out and you know makes big things, and he's very sort of, comes in and you know he's here. So I think it's probably to do with the atmosphere really.

The actual educational achievements of middle-class girls such as Naomi, Angela (discussed in Chapter Two), Hannah or Liz (discussed in Chapter Six) make a puzzle of the levels of their anxiety about performance, enough for us to understand that there were some complex emotional dynamics bound up in this. There was a material dimension to this anxiety too. The development of an increasingly competitive educational system over the decades in which these young women have been growing up has resulted in a drive towards the achievement of more and higher qualifications. While increased credentialism is one of the strategies through which professions respond to the threat of invasion from the working-classes, its impact has been felt throughout the middle-classes.

> Once, only men had to scale these (educational) walls, devoting their youth and young adulthood to preparation and apprenticeship. Today,

> however, almost no one gets in - male or female - without submitting to the same discipline and passing the same tests that were originally designed to exclude intruders from below. (Ehrenreich 1990: 220)

As several middle-class parents said, 'a good education is the only thing you can give your children'. In the interviews, the parents' and girls' emphasis was sometimes on the value of education in fulfilling potential, extending choices and providing possibilities for the future. What was far less clearly articulated was the necessity of a set of qualifications as precursor to a professional career, which is the backbone to being and staying middle-class, thereby achieving 'happiness'. Only by looking at what happened when these things did not seem to be firmly in place, can we understand the worry and fears that surround educational achievement.

For the working-class parents, 'sensitivity' and the meeting of needs were at odds with one another on some levels. Schools, especially secondary schools, do not cater for the emotional needs of the individual; education is divorced from feelings (Shaw 1995). Yet, for all but a minority, how we perform at school and what qualifications we come out with, will determine, at the very least, our social, material and economic futures. Given the middle-class imperative to maintain and reproduce bourgeois professional status, being 'happy' and good academic performance cannot be separated. I explored in Chapter Two how Angela's family had constructed a complex narrative around her younger sister to account for her poor (relative to Angela's) educational performance and in doing so attempted to offset the anxieties provoked in some family members by her 'slowness'. Angela's sister, although not as high-achieving as Angela, was hardworking and motivated in relation to school and did not arouse her parents' anger. In contrast, middle-class children who were not demonstrating their commitment to education courted extremely negative reactions from their parents. Helen and Naomi both had brothers whose indifference towards school was reflected (in the families' terms) in their examination results and the fact that they had not lined up a university place whilst still at school. In both families this was understood by the parents as a profound lack - of motivation, direction, ambition and most crucially self-discipline. Naomi says of her brother:

> So his way of doing it was like completely opting out, and was doing absolutely no work, doing nothing, just watching television, not having interests in anything. And my Dad gets really annoyed by that.

When the children of the professional middle-classes enacted their rebellion in the 1960s through a resistance to the educational institutions which would ensure them becoming just like their parents, they were charged with idleness and moral turpitude. The charge of individual pathology, which this lack of self-discipline is seen to represent, is perhaps more than anything else understood as the greatest threat to the maintenance of class position. Ehrenreich writes that in the middle-classes there is another anxiety: 'a fear of inner weakness, of growing soft, of failing to strive, of losing discipline and will' (1990: 15). We can begin to see then how the tendency towards constant purposeful activity in middle-class families (Allatt 1993) could also have its darker, more defensive side - an attempt to ensure that the cultural and social capital on which the 'middle-classes' depend is re-produced in each generation (Lucey and Reay 2002a).

What was witnessed throughout the data was that powerful anxieties and fears of failure operated within the middle-class families. For middle-class girls like Naomi, it was imperative that she succeeded educationally, despite the considerable emotional costs to both her and her family, as I explore in more detail in Chapter Six. Naomi herself was powerfully caught within this web of cultural, structural and class discourses - never able to allow herself off having to produce outstanding achievement, while never sure that she had made the grade - a fragile autonomy and confidence indeed. This is an autonomy that is shown up for what it is; the constant need for re-invention in a deeply insecure era, a fiction of autonomy that papers over the defences mounted to produce it.

Conclusion

In mapping the educational pathways of the working-class and middle-class girls to sixteen and twenty-one years old, this chapter began by demonstrating how differences between the girls in educational attainment and shape of educational trajectory are closely connected to social class of

origin. The case-studies of Kerry, Naomi, Patsy and Julie, using data from when they were four, ten and twenty-one years old, illustrated how working-class and middle-class girls are differently positioned by schools in terms of ability. Using these and other examples from the study, I have argued that what counts as educational success and failure is understood very differently by the working-class and middle-class girls and I have made links between these constructions of success and failure and the emotional processes that operated within some working-class and middle-class families. Through the data, I have illustrated differences of interaction between parents, schools and teachers and highlighted some of the difficulties that working-class parents faced when interacting with teachers on their daughters' behalf. Lastly, I have argued that educational success is an integral part of contemporary, professional middle-class feminine subjectivity and that fears of failure are heavily guarded against by the girls and their parents. Most of the professional middle-class parents invest in making sure their daughters succeed at school, whereas working-class parents, most of whom did not have good or successful experiences of school themselves, stress 'happiness' at school for their daughters, sometimes at the cost of attainment. Despite producing outstanding attainment, some middle-class girls felt anxious and insecure about their school performance; this is a theme that is explored in more depth in Chapter Six.

In the following chapter, I focus on Nicky and Holly, two of the five working-class young women who did well at school and went to university. These are working-class young women who embarked on a project of social mobility through education. I examine the concept of 'hybridity', developed by cultural theorists to articulate the possibilities contained in new hybrid racial and ethnic identities, and explore its usefulness for extending an analysis of the shifting constitution of contemporary feminine subjectivities. I ask whether working-class young women, by being educationally successful, can become class, as well as ethnic hybrids.

CHAPTER FIVE

UNEASY HYBRIDS: EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS AND THE WORKING-CLASS GIRL

Introduction

This chapter focuses on some of the working-class young women from *Project 4:21* who were at university and who were on a firmer path towards a 'professional' career than the majority of the working-class girls. Cultural theorists have put forward the concept of 'hybridity' as a way to understand new forms of ethnic subjectivities in the context of post-colonialism and globalisation (Bhabha 1990; Modood 1992). I examine the usefulness of this concept in understanding shifts in the constitution of contemporary feminine subjectivities, with a particular focus on working-class girls who, by being educationally successful, may become class, as well as ethnic hybrids.

In Chapter Four I discussed how improvements in some girls' examination results at GCSE level were interpreted as one important sign that the young women of 1990s Britain were powerful, autonomous subjects who could realise all of their desires; that is, that they could become successful career women *and* stay feminine, be brainy *and* sexy. That young women could 'have it all' was an idea that had its seeds sown in the 1960s but really took root and established itself in the 1980s. It turned out to be a particularly seductive and tenacious idea, surviving in the face of strong feminist critique and overwhelming evidence that has shown the persistence of gendered inequalities (Crompton 1993; Arnot et al 1999; Plummer 2000). Nevertheless, from the power-dressed female executive of the 1980s, through the kick-ass and clever 'girl power' of the millennial years, modern celebratory stories of transformed contemporary femininity, particularly the notion that women can

now 'have it all' have abounded in the 1990s, particularly in the popular media[1]. Discourses of endless possibility for *all* girls circulated freely, although tempered and regulated by the kind of meritocratic principles that could explain any failure to 'achieve' and to 'have' as a personal one (Lucey et al 2003b).

The psychosocial approach that I take and develop throughout this thesis is one way of pushing beyond accounts of the social world that prioritise conscious, rational explanations in order to appreciate the significance of and connections between unconscious and irrational dimensions of individuals and society (see Chapters One and Two). In this chapter I use this approach to critique current conceptualisations of hybridity and discourses of upward social mobility. Unquestioned in contemporary social and educational policy is the notion that upward social mobility is the desired outcome of social progress. This is an implicit assumption that runs through all variations of the discourse of 'social capital' embraced by New Labour (Coleman 1988; Fukuyama 1999; Putnam 2000; see also Chapter Seven). However, discourses of social mobility and social capital tend to hold denials: of the losses that are fundamental to and unavoidable in change, even when those changes are desired; of the amount of psychological work involved in transformation; and of the emotional costs of that work. However, these inherent tensions are not commented on in education and social policy debates (Thomson et al 2003). This silence/absence in currently available discourses creates obstacles to exploring the ways in which the hybridisation of working-class feminine subjects, through educational success with its promise of social mobility, can provoke as many difficult feelings in families, such as anxiety and ambivalence as it can positive ones, such as pride, excitement and love. But a refusal to pay attention to them runs the danger of denying crucial aspects of experience (Tokarczyk and Fay 1995; Reay 1997; Plummer 2000). I wish to stress here that anxiety, ambivalence and the psychic mechanisms developed to defend against them are by no means the sole province of the working-classes; in Chapter Six and in other

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[1] See Mills et al (1998) as an example of a self-help text for women to manage who 'have it all', and Holland et al (1998) who examine how such discourses impact upon young women's sexual experiences and the formation of feminine sexual identities.

publications I discuss the articulation and effects of the psychic defensive organisations of some professional middle-class families (Lucey and Reay 2000b, 2002; Walkerdine et al 2001; Lucey 2004).

This chapter concentrates on two working-class twenty-one year old young women, Nicky and Holly, who were constructing and negotiating hybrid identities in the liminal spaces of 'race' and class. For Holly, a mixed race[2] young woman, her ethnic hybridity could be said to pre-exist her through her dual parentage. Both Holly and Nicky, a white young woman, might be held up as examples of educational 'success'; though coming from families where there was no history of educational achievement, they nevertheless did well in school and gained the qualifications needed to study on undergraduate courses. In terms of social class, they were in the process of entering spaces mostly unknown to themselves or their families and could be understood as forging hybrid class identities.

Hybridity

The concept of 'hybridity' was first developed to identify and understand new patterns of ethnic identity in a 'post-colonial' context of globalisation, diasporic identities and shifting forms of international relations and processes of migration (Bhabha 1984, 1990, 1996; Gilroy 1993). There are numerous dimensions to the concept and it is used in a multitude of ways by writers who seek to challenge existing paradigms of identity. For Modood (1992), hybrid cultures are transmitted and transformed within new locations and contexts, creating new forms or developing old forms of identity in new ways. In these changing environments we see the emergence of multi-ethnic, multi-layered identities; what Modood calls 'hyphenated' 'identities'.

As Anthias notes 'In some versions, hybridity is depicted as transgressive, or as enabling a privileged access to knowledge' (Anthias 2001: 621). Bhabha, who developed the notion of hybridity in relation to conditions of political inequity and

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[2] The use of this term is discussed later in this chapter.

oppression, views it as holding such positive possibilities. He stresses the constant 'negotiation of discursive doubleness' in hybridity, but is at pains to point out that by 'doubleness' he does not mean the same as binarism or duality. For Bhabha, 'the hybrid strategy or discourse opens up a space of negotiation where power is unequal but its articulation may be equivocal. Such negotiation is neither assimilation nor collaboration' (1996: 58) but an opportunity to take up and develop a critical stance towards hierarchy. Closely allied to the concept of hybridity are notions of 'border existences', 'liminality' (Grossberg 1996: 91) and a 'third space' (Bhabha 1990) to describe and map the existence of the hybrid.

This celebratory stance has however, been challenged by writers who maintain that theorisations of hybridity do not pay enough attention to power and social inequalities, particularly of gender and social class, thereby limiting the potential of hybrid structural forms to challenge structural inequalities (Tanikella 2003). Anthias (2001) in her critique of the notion of hybridity argues that 'Issues of exclusion, political mobilisation on the basis of collective identity, and narrations of belonging and otherness cannot be addressed adequately unless they are located within other constructions of difference and identity, particularly around gender and class' (2001: 620).

Adkins wonders whether hybridity is a good enough concept to capture the complexities of 'current refashionings of gender' (Adkins 2001: 12). In the context of changing work practices it has been argued that there is a hybridisation and reversal of work-place gender identities (Adkins 1995) where men are required to adopt more 'feminine' attitudes and skills associated with the service industries (see Chapter Eight for further discussion of this point). Ironically, at the same time, 'These changes involve the performance of new forms of femininity, a distancing from variants traditionally perceived as normative and the adoption of qualities previously viewed as masculine' (Reay 2001:163). It may be that women have more understanding of the notion that the self is not a unitary subject because they have historically been required to remake themselves as the (changing) object of male desire. Rather, it is men, and particularly working-class and lower middle-class men who now have to

face the necessity of constant self-invention and the production of themselves in a marketable (feminised) image (Lucey and Walkerdine 1999; O'Donnell 2000).

These kinds of transformations in the economy require a new kind of feminine subject – one who is capable of understanding herself as an autonomous agent, the producer of her present and her future, an inventor and constant re-inventor of the person she may be or become. Some theorists emphasise the liberating opportunities presented by these shifts; chances for us all to break free from the old constraints of gender, class and community (Giddens 1991; Beck 1992). Discourses which describe young women's lives through narratives of 'wanting', 'getting' and 'having' abound, but far fewer accounts are able or willing to engage with the complex losses which the new sociality brings. For instance, the construction and maintenance of a self is a constant struggle 'won only provisionally and always entailing expenditure of considerable amounts of psychological energy' (Frosh 1991: 187). It is clear that for many of the young women of *Project 4:21*, the speed of societal change and the instabilities of the social world were turned inward to be experienced as instabilities of the self (see Chapters Four, Six, Seven and Eight).

Of the twenty-one working-class young women who took part in the last phase of *Project 4:21* only five (27%) stayed on in school past the age of compulsory education to A level and at the last stage of the research were applying to study, were already studying, or had completed courses of study at higher education level. This was compared to fifteen (93%) of the middle-class young women. In the following section I focus on two of these working-class young women: Holly, a mixed race twenty-one year old who lived with her partner and their two children, and who was studying at the local university for a Masters degree, and Nicky, a single, white, twenty-one year old undergraduate student at a university far from her hometown. I am using the particularities of their biographies to highlight not only their uniqueness, but also to pick out and trace the threads of similarity that run through and across the narratives of all the five educationally successful working-class young women.

Into the family

Even though working-class and black families have often been negatively implicated in the educational failure of their children, I do not want to abstract these young women from their families (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989). The challenge for my analysis is to refute those models whose explanatory power lies in pathologising any family practices not immediately recognisable as middle-class and instead work towards theorisations which are able to take on board the significance of family relationships and practices in a different way.

As Plummer points out, explanations of educational failure are wide-ranging:

> Theories of genetic difference (Herrnstein and Murray 1994), social, linguistic and cultural deprivation have all been used at various times. Social factors relating to aspects of home background such as parent education, occupation and work condition, unemployment, one-parent family status, health and diet, infant mortality, death rates, poverty, poor housing, family size and cultural factors – in particular language and socialisation – have seen to be causal. (Plummer 2000: 27)

In many of these explanations, parents, home and families are heavily implicated in educational failure, and since it is working-class children who are far more likely to fail in the education system than middle-class children, the inseparability of home and school in the success and failure of working-class children has long been taken as read. Although this is also the case for the production of middle-class educational success, middle-class families are discursively positioned in a positive way and they are not subject to the kind of pathologisations which historically inform regulative and interventionist educational policies aimed at raising the achievement of working-class children (Finch 1984; David 1993; Vincent and Warren 1999). While I want to retain the significance of the family in explanations of educational achievement, there is a danger of becoming trapped by available discourses which I feel to be inadequate on two counts. Firstly, a deficit model underpins conceptions of working-class families. That is, since middle-class children do vastly better in school than working-class children (McCulloch 1998), the everyday practices of working-class families are often viewed as somehow lacking that which ensures success in middle-class families (Plummer 2000). Policies and initiatives

designed to improve working-class children's educational performance have focused on precisely those interior spaces of family interaction; spaces that have been inevitably pathologised when set against the 'normalised' interior family spaces of the middle-classes (Vincent and Warren 1999). Furthermore this serves to push responsibility further and further into the family and away from structural and social considerations (Vincent and Warren 1999).

Secondly, existing sociological work which attempts to theorise connections between the individual and society (between agency and structure) is limited by an unwillingness to work with the notion of unconscious processes. In addition to this, traditional sociology invests much in an indvidual/society dualism (Henriques et al 1998) so that the social and the psychic are understood as twin but opposite poles or forces. In contrast, the psychoanalytically informed post-structuralism that guides my work assumes a mutual constitution of the subject and the social.

While the educational pathways from primary school to university for the vast majority of the middle-class girls in this study were so smooth and similar it was almost as if they were on educational 'conveyor belts' (see Chapter Six), the routes towards educational success for the working-class girls were more circuitous and less predictable. Things which were clearly important to some of the working-class girls and young women in relation to educational achievement were unimportant to others; some had positive experiences of school, some did not; some did as they were told, others were rebellious and challenging; some found study easy, others found it intensely difficult. In relation to parents, some mothers and fathers had high expectations of their daughters, but not all; some parents themselves enjoyed learning and study and had returned to education as adults; for some their children's schooling provoked anxieties around failure. While some of these working-class girls had 'sensitive mothers', others did not (see Chapters Three and Four). These polarisations, although somewhat artificial, help to stress that scoring highly on the positive side of these dichotomies was no guarantee or predictor whatsoever of good educational outcomes. There were no straightforward correlations between educational achievement as measured by standard examination indicators and what, in

educational research, policy and practice are continuously taken to be the weakest links between 'working class' families and schooling.

Although I do not offer a typology of the educationally successful working-class girl, powerfully present in all of their narratives was the notion of 'independence', and an identification of themselves as 'strong and independent', a self-identification which, throughout their narratives was closely linked to their parents' struggle and the desire for 'escape'. It is the configuration of these emotional fields that are explored through the following case studies.

Nicky

Nicky, a white working-class twenty-one year old young woman, was in the last year of her undergraduate course. She hoped to continue her studies to Masters level. When she was ten years old Nicky's primary school teacher described her as 'a steady, competent little worker (...) she's quietly motivated, she's not one of these that makes a great fuss about anything' (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989: 192). This resonated clearly with the adolescent Nicky who quietly got on with her work and never made a fuss about being bullied because she didn't want to worry her parents and because she wanted 'to try and sort things out for myself'. 'Never asking for anything' and 'never making a fuss' were common themes in the narratives of young working-class women who had done well at school, and was also present in their parents' descriptions of them (Walkerdine et al 2001).

Nicky went to a mixed comprehensive which she describes as 'very rough' and which she 'couldn't wait' to leave. After achieving 2 As, 2 Bs, 4 Cs and 1 D at GCSE she went on to study science A levels at the local FE college. Having firmly decided that she wanted to go to university, which she described as her 'big aim in life', she was also aware that competition was tough and she needed to get good A level results. Feminist accounts have highlighted how even the most basic information about the education system is simply not available to working-class children (Plummer 2000). Even those young women who were

considered 'bright', who were able to apply themselves at school and whose parents wanted them to do well educationally, were given little advice on how to move into higher education.

> Well I talked to my parents about it, but my parents never went to College or anything, they finished school early, so. They always wanted me to get a good education, but they weren't able to give much practical advice.... I had to make them [decisions] on my own, and when I actually applied for my university degree, I didn't really know what I wanted to do at the time, apart from Science. So I was a bit in the dark.

When Nicky did not get the grades she needed to get into university, she took a year out. This was not a gap year characterised by the kind of travel and 'experience' (often through paid or voluntary work overseas) which many of the middle-class young women described. Instead Nicky took an Open University Course to get the entrance qualifications she needed for her chosen undergraduate course and worked in a shop in order to save enough money so that she would not have to ask her parents for any when she began her studies.

For some parents who attempted to provide the kind of continuity between home and school which was so firmly in place in the middle-class families, this meant going back to school themselves. For instance, twenty-one year old Dawn's mother studied English and Maths at GCSE so she would be able to understand what her daughters were doing at school and help them with their work. But when Dawn went on to study A levels she had to say to her 'Look, now you're going into A levels, I'm not, I'm not up to that.' Most working-class parents however, whose own experiences of schooling were characterised by failure, only felt able to help their children in the early primary school years. Unlike the professional middle-class girls, whose parents had a wealth of knowledge about higher education, as well as offering considerable financial support and stability, the working-class girls knew that the only path to university was likely to be one that they would have to find about themselves.

> I mean they've always been there. I knew they would have helped me if they were able to, and they did, sort of, like when I got my prospectus for University, they sat down and went through them with me and I sort of told them what I was looking for, and they tried to help me out that way. But apart from that there wasn't really much practical advice they could give, 'cos they hadn't been in the same situation themselves. They've been good.

Drawing on their longitudinal study of young people, Thomson, Henderson and Holland (2003) look at the relationship between resources, location, families. ability and ambition in the educational biographies of working-class young women. They maintain that 'theories of individualization tend to underplay the importance of relationships and forms of reciprocity and obligation that are embedded within them for understanding the identities and practices in which individuals engage' (2003: 44).

Working-class girls like Nicky found inner resources in order to achieve their goals, but their unwillingness to seek help from parents, to never 'make a fuss about anything' also speaks of a psychic defence. It is not uncommon for working-class women who have gone through higher education to speak of the fact that their parents went without in order that the children might have something, often continually throughout their childhood (Walkerdine 1996). Nicky's mother and father spoke of the financial struggles they faced, and it was clear that this difficult knowledge, of deprivation and poverty, had shaped Nicky's determination to not be a financial burden on her parents.

> When she was working, every penny went in the bank and then she used to cry because she had no money to go out. The pressure used to get to her, you know. And we used to say "go out and enjoy yourself", "I can't, I can't, it's got to go for Uni". Because we can't financially support her through the University. So she's done it herself. She's very determined.
> Nicky's mother

> I try and help my parents a bit I suppose. I try not to ask too much. 'Cos I know they can't afford it, but they don't like that, they don't like me knowing that they can't afford it, which is fair enough. (....) I wanted to make sure that when I went to university I had enough money. I mean, I get a full grant, but I wanted to make sure that I had enough money, so I never came out of it in debt. I'm the same now, I mean, it's really tough trying to survive on my grant.
> Nicky

Working class parents often talked about how they tried to give their daughters the message that life is a struggle and something that must be survived. Nicky's mother said, 'Well I always used to tell her as she was growing up you've got to be hard in this world to survive.' One of the effects of the girls' sense of their

parents being heavily burdened was that they did not want to add to their burden in any way.

Play and work

In Chapter Three I argued that when the middle-class girls were four years old at home with their mothers, domestic work was routinely turned into educative play by their mothers. This fuzziness of boundaries around work and play contrasted with the practices of the working-class mothers, who were more likely to draw distinct lines between work and play (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989). For instance, Nicky's mother refused to play with Nicky because:

> Mother: I'm just going to do this work first love, I've got washing to do.
> Nicky: Yeah?
> Mother: Got ironing to do.
> Nicky: Yeah?
> Mother: Got altering to do.
> Nicky: Yeah?
> Mother: Yeah, well, it all takes time love' .
> (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989: 81)

It is interesting then that oppositions between play and hard work emerged in particular ways in the narratives of the working-class young women who were at university. In the middle-class families, going to university was most often viewed as a rite of passage, one that other family members had undertaken, including many parents. In these professional middle-class families, there was an expectation that student life should be both a time of serious study and a youthful sabbatical in which to experience and experiment with the new. In contrast, the working-class young women at university or planning to go, often encountered negative perceptions of students from their wider family.

> My uncle (...) He's very biased about a lot of things and one of them is students so he doesn't believe I do anything at University except go out and get drunk. (...) a lot of people in my family just think I'm playing at things. I'm going nowhere and that I just don't have what it takes to hold down a job. And that has been the view from a few of my uncles and aunts and one or two of my cousins and I've just given up trying to explain it. Nicky

It would seem that some working-class young women however, had on some level introjected the notion that students did indeed do what they want, which

was usually taken to mean very little. And indeed, the young women *were* enjoying themselves at university; they were having fun and doing what they wanted; they did not have the kinds of responsibilities that their parents had when they were the same age, and they were looking forward to a better life than their parents had. The knowledge that their parents were supporting something which may have pushed them further apart from one another produced some guilt. 'Survival guilt' is a common experience amongst people who have survived a great trauma or genocide, for example, when others died (Langer 1991). While the families of these young women did not perish of course, there was a sense in which their new lives as upwardly mobile women was produced on the back of the deprivations of their parents.

While parents gave the strong message that this better life was exactly what they wanted for their children, envy was sometimes aroused, an emotion with such negative connotations that few would give voice to it. Nicky's mother said, 'I must admit I get jealous sometimes, you know, and thinking Cor I wish we'd had the chance to do that when we were younger.' Whether envy and anger were spoken or not, the knowledge that they were being given a chance that their parents never had was embroiled in the experience of educational success for the working-class young women. Within a psychoanalytic perspective, the recognition that one might be the object of others' envy may not exist on a conscious, rational level, precisely because it is so irrational to think that a parent with whom we share a loving relationship could harbour such negative feelings towards us. However, on an unconscious level, the fear that this envy may cause us to be the target of parents' aggressive feelings continues to operate and may in turn provoke our own aggression. In an object-relations model (Klein 1959), aggression towards the parent (typically the mother) can be notoriously difficult for the child to express or even acknowledge because of intense fears that the parent will retaliate by an equally aggressive rejection of the child.

Holly

In this section I look at the case of Holly, a mixed race twenty-one year old, whose mother was white British and whose father was black African-Caribbean, to explore some uneasy aspects of the hybrid position of the mixed race young woman. There is a growing literature in the UK, US and Australia[3] on the experiences of mixed race, dual parentage or multi-ethnic people (Fatimilehin 1999; Alibhai-Brown 2001; Mahtani 2002; Tizard and Phoenix 2002). This is an area of strong debate, some of which is concerned with the language of racial identification and designation. I have chosen to use the term 'mixed race' following Parker and Song (2001) who maintain that theoretical reflection alone cannot determine the status of 'race' – it must be analysed through specific instances, of which 'mixed race' is one of the most important and the most neglected. Mahtani (2001) however, maintains that the identity designation of 'multi-ethnic' rather than 'mixed race' acknowledges the complexity of an 'Armenia-French-Portugese-Canadian' identity (p173).

In the introduction to this chapter I noted that the concept of hybridity has become a central idea and term within discussions of mixed race identities (Young 1996). Recent debates on cultural identity have stressed, variously, the fluidity, fragmentation and multiplicity of subjectivity in these postmodern and postcolonial times (Donald and Rattansi 1992). Post-structuralist and feminist accounts of ethnicity question the fixed binary of black/white contained in previous models of race and racism, partly by paying attention to the ways in which differences such as those articulated around culture, gender, social class and locality are articulated (Blair and Holland 1995; Brah 1996). A further move towards breaking down those dualisms has been the critical examination of white ethnicities (Rattansi 1992; Back 1995; Nayak 2001). It is now recognised that ethnicity is not only the constituency of minority or subordinate groups, 'and that those who are represented as the majority in the state have a hidden ethnicity that is naturalised' (Anthias 2001: 629).

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[3] See for example Rockquemore and Brunsma (2002) and Wright et al (2003).

Holly had two young children and lived with her black African-Caribbean partner who was the children's father. Motherhood was a powerful and meaningful part of her life, as was her relationship with her own mother. Her understanding and experience of mothers and motherhood were interwoven with her ideas about her own identity and were recurring themes throughout her interviews. For Holly, being strong and independent and not having to rely on other people was articulated through a powerful identification with her mother, who escaped a violent relationship with their father to bring Holly and her three siblings up alone.

> I don't know, I think my mum's like a really strong woman and I think she's made us - like all of us are really strong and independent and we can just stand by ourselves, we don't need anybody else. And I think it's the way she's brought us up, so that we don't need to rely on other people.

The idea for Holly that life is a struggle, that as her mother told her 'we're gonna have to work twice as hard as anybody else' because she is mixed race, together with a reliance on the self and a strong identification with her mother, was the emotional and discursive mix which drove her educational career. Mirza (1992) argues that a preoccupation with subculture, in particular 1980s subcultures of resistance had a major effect on the study of black women. What emerged in this work was a core romantic idea that young black women were motivated mostly by and through an identification with strong black mothers. For Holly, the overlapping discursive categories of 'strong woman' and 'black woman', while there may indeed be, as Mirza argues, 'mythical' aspects to them, have nevertheless been ones that were meaningful to her. A recurring theme throughout her narrative was her mother's strength in having to do everything for and by herself and she consistently identified with this. For herself, Holly constructed a coherent self-identity as a 'strong black mother' even though her own mother is white.

The concept of the 'liminal space' suggests the idea of ambiguity and ambivalence. It is used to suggest as an in-between space where borders are porous and structures disintegrate, and holds the possibility of transition from

one state or space to another (Bhabha 1994)[4]. Holly's narrative articulated the uneasy hybrid position of the mixed race girl, the pain as well as pleasure in the occupation of liminal spaces, the borderlands of black/white where racism is also fluid and breaches boundaries. She was required to walk a very thin and fluid line in relation to her colour identity, particularly when she moved school at age eleven. At this time she transferred from a predominantly white primary school where:

> I was getting beaten up, called nigger, coolie you know, and they didn't see me as white at all. Cos me and my sister were the only black kids in the whole of the school.

She then moved to a more racially mixed secondary school, where, in order to fit in, she was required to perform a completely different kind of racial identification.

> I can remember everybody used to call me white girl because I'd grown up in (....) and we went to an all white school, I'd become like whitified, you know what I mean? So when I started the school I was very white, but they didn't like that because I wasn't being black enough. So then I went for a good few years trying to be as black as I could be, do you know what I mean? Talking in slang and just really hard and beating up white girls just for being white girls you know.

Tizard and Phoenix in their research with children of mixed-parentage note that 'racialised identities, like other social identities, are not fixed entities' (2002: 233) and stress the importance of context in the formation and change of racialised identities over an individual's lifetime. They maintain that social class, gender and type of school attended made a significant impact on how children constructed racialised definitions of themselves and others: 'being a mixed-parentage girl in a middle class girls' school was thus a very different and easier experience from being a mixed-parentage boy in a mainly working-class school' (p229).

Holly's narrative highlights clearly that identifications are rarely straightforward and much more likely to be cross-cut by contradictory dis-identifications. Alibhai-Brown (2001) reports that many of the people of her study say they have felt pressure to

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[4] The 'liminal space' might be read as a metaphorical realm where ideas and concepts: artistic, political, cultural, social or otherwise, are in constant states of contestation and negotiation.

conform to the idea that they are black, even when they do not 'feel' black. Tizard and Phoenix also found that half of the children in their study thought of themselves as black and argue that this might be due to the distinctiveness of black culture, the links it provides with a larger community, and because they have been relatively invisible in official and other systems (2002).

Holly's shifting subjectivity was played out at school, while careful attempts were made to protect her white mother from her rejection of whiteness. Holly had to perform major feats of binary demarcations: between home and school, black and white, conformity and resistance. For instance, she managed to be both rebellious *and* resistant to the school's culture at a public level, while privately conforming to the demands and discipline of academic work.

> Well I was quite smart actually, because I was doing all this at school, so that's probably why the teachers thought I wouldn't get anything, but then I'd go home and study. So I was having all the fun in the day and then I'd go home and do my work. I wasn't that stupid not to do any work.

Mirza, in her study of black British young women and girls, challenges the 'myth of underachievement' of black girls in education (1992: 10). She argues that black girls who were doing well formed their own sub-culture within the school, but one that could not be characterised by either resistance or conformity. Instead although they 'looked' as if they were disaffected while in the classroom, in their interviews or when observed away from class, they were seen to be strongly committed to some aspects of schooling.

These were painful years for Holly, I would suggest, partly because of the ambivalence she held, but was unable to acknowledge, towards her mother as a white woman. Perhaps she was also disowning a part of herself; her own whiteness. No wonder when it was this aspect of her subjectivity that was most problematic to and denied by others: white people only saw her blackness and black people wanted to attack her whiteness:

> but it's a case of if I'm walking down the street, I'm seen as black, I'm not seen as being white, if I'd committed a crime it's just another black person committing the crime. Not a white person, but people can't seem to see that.

> And I think also because I was like suffering abuse from black people as well for being part white, so I was like getting it from all directions.

The development of 'racial', ethnic and class identities depends upon processes of inclusion and exclusion, 'the positing of boundaries in relation to who can and cannot belong according to certain parameters which are extremely heterogeneous, ranging from the credentials of being born in the right place, conforming to cultural or other symbolic practices, language, and very centrally behaving in sexually appropriate ways' (Anthias and Yuval 1992: 4). Discussions of hybridisation stress fluidity and the possibilities contained in liminal spaces. What is less explored in those debates, but arises continually in the stories of the young women of this research is that the creation of hybrid subjectivities also involves the construction and the constant policing of internal and external 'boundaries', where competing and conflictual people, behaviour, identifications and ideas must be kept apart.

In the move from primary to secondary school Holly's ethnic and racial identification shifted from white to black as her social context dramatically changed. In order to make this move, Holly had to move away from an identification with whiteness towards identifying herself as a black girl. But her blackness was not taken for granted, either by herself or the other black girls. This dis-identification with whiteness was something that had to be proved, to her black peers, and also to herself, through a visible assault on white girls. Within a Kleinian perspective it might be understood that the now despised white part of her own identity was split off and projected onto the white girls, where it could be aggressively attacked. But Holly was in a psychic dilemma, for her mother, whom she loved, was also white and Holly needed to kept her hatred of white girls away from her mother, which I suggest was achieved through another split – the split between home and school.

Kleinian and object relations theory suggests ways in which boundaries are constructed , separating the 'good' and the 'bad' (Winnicott 1957; Klein 1959), 'the stereotypical representations of others which inform social practices of exclusion and inclusion but which, at the same time, define the self' (Sibley 1995: 5). The interconnected psychic processes of splitting and projection are two of the means by which difficult feelings, experiences and knowledges about the self and about others

are managed (see Chapters One and Two). Internal demarcations are shored up and articulated through the development of external boundaries which help to keep things, people, emotions, activities in their 'proper' place.

Psychoanalytically informed approaches, for instance those drawing on the work of the psychiatrist Franz Fanon have revealed how racial or ethnic identities are formed in a relational dynamic of power, fear and desire (Fanon 1969).

> So this process of rejection is not a neat, clinical method of expulsion. Like a shadow cast by a moving figure, the sublimated identity is ever present in the act of subjectivity, operating in the dark margins of the unconscious. (Nayak 2001: 142)

While we may desperately want to banish troublesome aspects of our own identities, this is no easy task. As with Holly and the white part of herself that she not only embodied, but was also contained in her relationship with her mother, we are not only deeply attached to those aspects, but also psychologically dependent on them. 'It is for this reason that what is socially peripheral is so frequently symbolically central' (Stallybrass and White 1986: 18).

Belonging and Escape

Nicky and Holly both stated that they had 'always wanted to go to university'. This desire certainly seemed to be connected to their determination to embark and remain on their educational journeys and to actively divert, if not halt the process of social reproduction. As Nicky said:

> I've always wanted to go to 'uni'. I don't know why. I have to do a bit better for myself. 'Cos a lot of people my own age in my family a bit younger, a bit older or, all they've done is, well a lot of them have dropped out of school early and gone and got themselves a job that's got absolutely no prospects to it, like working in a Burger Bar or something. And I just did not want that for myself. I couldn't see myself spending the rest of my life stuck in a Burger Bar. I just knew I had to get out and do something a bit better.

It is interesting to note that Holly was the only young woman who was able to continue her studies, and take them onto a higher level, through pregnancy and motherhood. She had her first child during her A levels and her second child while she was studying for her first degree. It was found that the working-class

parents of *Project 4:21* were more likely than the middle-class parents to support their daughters in keeping a baby should they become pregnant[5]. In middle-class families, pregnancy signalled catastrophe and foreclosure, particularly of the young women's educational career. In contrast, working-class young women were more likely to assume that there would be enough child-care support from their parents to make the pursuit of their education a realistic possibility – albeit at a later time (Walkerdine et al 2001). Even though Holly's mother was angry with Holly when she became pregnant at eighteen, she was supportive of her keeping the baby rather than having the pregnancy terminated:

> Whatever your decision is I'll stand by you. And then when she said she was keeping the baby I said Oh good, cos there would have been hell if you'd got rid of it. (...) Yeah I took her to her first ante-natal clinic.
> Holly's mother

> I told her over the phone and I said "Oh mum my hair's falling out" and she said "Why?" and I said "Oh I'm pregnant." So she had a shout down the phone and by the time I got home she'd calmed down and she was like really supportive and whatever I decided to do, that would be fine for her, and that included - like she had suggested that I had the baby and she'd raise it, you know, so that I could continue doing what I wanted. And she was like really supportive. The only thing that she kept was that I still had to do my exams, and that was the only thing she was worried about.
> Holly

Holly's mother continued to be deeply and practically involved in the care of her grandchildren. Nevertheless, for Holly, who ironically was the most highly qualified young woman in the entire sample at this point in her life, the spectre of poverty and racial pathologisation had in part at least, provoked and promoted the kind of motivation needed to stay on an educational pathway and not, as she said, 'be another case of another black girl being on social security'.[6]

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[5] The working-class young women were more likely to maintain a pregnancy even though middle-class and working-class young women became sexually active at around the same age (see Walkerdine et al 2001: 187).

[6] Fuller maintains that gaining educational qualifications is one way in which black girls can prove their self worth, and understands this as the girls' active rejection of the negative inferences that are frequently drawn towards the categorisations female and black (Fuller 1983, referenced in Mirza 1992: 22).

All of the working-class young women who had done well at school shared a fantasy of escape in their drive towards higher education, one which could be closely connected to their parents' explicitly articulated wish for their children to have better lives than they did. Nicky's mother said 'All we want is for our children to do better than we did. I think that's what everyone wants.' Indeed, Holly hoped her children would not have to struggle as much as she did to become educationally successful; 'I just want things to be better for them'. But this was not what everyone wanted or needed; it was not a desire articulated by the middle-class parents. For these working-class families, higher education and the possibilities it offered of entrance into a profession, represented escape from the grinding facts of ordinary working-class life[7]. These working-class mothers and fathers did not want their daughters to have to do the kinds of work they had to do: boring, repetitive, dirty and hard, with little pay, status or security. However, in the current climate of competition for places at the 'top' universities and increased credentialism in the job market, there are no guarantees that graduate status will protect young working-class women from this kind of work. It is students from working-class backgrounds who are most likely to attain degrees from the 'new' universities and enter insecure, low status, often boring jobs in the service labour market (Buckham 1998; Ball et al 2000).

As Pilling (1990) suggests, working-class parents' desires and dreams of a better life for their children can act as a powerful engine which drives their children's positive motivation towards education and helps to maintain them on the path to higher education. However, in *Project 4:21*, the provenance of this motivation meant that other, equally powerful messages were transferred in the emotional interchange between some working-class parents and daughters. For the middle-class families, educational success was the theme around which the reproduction of social class position revolved (Walkerdine et al 2001; Lucey and

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[7] As discussed in Chapter Two, the sample is a polarised one. In the context of the discussion in this chapter, this means that I am unable to explore variations in experience between different class fractions.

Reay 2002a). Within this scenario, what was aimed at was to become like your parents in the sense of having the same kind of career as them, the same levels of income, material comfort and lifestyle. For the working-class daughters of aspirational parents, the message was quite different; it was clearly about *not* becoming like them and it was this which was central to both their daughters' drive to higher education and the deep ambivalences which beset some of them. They were, as Caroline Knowles observed in the context of her discussion on 'race, identities and lives', 'caught in the dynamic of belonging and escape' (1999: 128).

The twin shafts of education and professional status on which many strands of middle-class subjectivity rest meant that the children of the professional middle-classes received strong messages from early childhood that it was their destiny to go to university and become professionals, a destiny which was pushed hard and had its own real constraints and costs (Lucey and Reay 2002a). This was certainly not the destiny of the working-class girls of *Project 4:21*, nor was it presented as such by those who achieved examination success at school. Was this why so many of them gave up on education, even when they had a relatively sure footing on that path (see Walkerdine et al 2001)? Because it was not the working-class girls' destiny, the motivation to remain on that path had to be generated from within. There were no structural reasons why they should succeed and therefore they had to rely on their own inner resources. However, I also wish to stress that, should success be achieved by the working-class girl, the hopes and aspirations of her and her parents become intertwined with the pain of separation and therefore loss and shift of identity (Reay 1997; see also my discussion of the Green family in Chapter Two). The girls who did not do so well at school at least did not have to face the difficulties that choice can bring.

I do not want to suggest that the working-class young women necessarily 'blame' their parents for any difficulties they face in becoming educationally successful. It may be that part of the dynamic they are operating within is a recognition of the unjust and oppressive forces that are outside of their parents' control. That these young women empathise deeply with their parents' struggles was evident, and arose in discussions about money. Nevertheless, in order to

improve on their parents' lives (something that the parents themselves wanted for their daughters) some educationally successful working-class young women had to differentiate themselves from those who did not or could not improve (Skeggs 1997b: 82; Thomson et al 2003). Academics from working-class families have expressed how wanting something different, something more than your parents can not only hold the implication that there is something wrong with your parents' life, but also carries a hidden (because unconsciously defended against) notion that there is something wrong with *them* (Trevithick 1988; Plummer 2000). This kind of dis-identification with one's parents, family and community can engender a deep sense of shame - itself so shameful that it must be psychically regulated through repressive mechanisms.

I would suggest that an unwillingness and inability to face these kinds of dis-identifications with parents, family and community was one of the reasons that many of the working-class young women who expressed a desire to invest themselves in education, found it difficult to motivate themselves to carry on studying past compulsory schooling (see Chapter Four). Dis-identification meant becoming different to and separating from those previously identified with. For the working-class young women, and their parents, the leaving involved in going to university and perhaps becoming a professional hit on a very deep level. These were separations on a grand scale which most of the middle-class young women did not have to tackle. Of course psychic separation from parents is an issue for everyone to a greater or lesser extent. But for able, working-class girls who did well at school, what was so clearly at stake was the loss of identity, control, status (within the family perhaps), the community, belonging, safety: all major ego losses, any one of which could unconsciously constitute a threat to one's very survival.

Nicky made a very clear and conscious decision to 'get away' to a university far from her home town. Perhaps less conscious was her decision to go to one in a city where there were strong family connections. Her rational choices about which university offered her the best course, had the best reputation, facilities and so on, may have been powerfully informed by her unconscious desire to put in place some bridges between her old, familiar world and the new world

she was moving into. Holly, like Nicky, articulated clear, conscious desires for independence and escape from poverty, and yet by becoming a teenage mother, not once, but twice, both at crucial junctions on her educational pathway, she did the very thing guaranteed to keep her close to and dependent on her mother. We could therefore view teenage motherhood as a complex attempt to maintain present status in the face of overwhelming change and loss (Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody 2001).

Going it alone

As Nicky pointed out, nobody seemed to know anything that could help her and she had no financial resources to fall back on if she got into debt. She presented to others, and viewed herself, as capable and independent. This was all well and good, and perhaps the very characteristics that got her to university. But there is another way of looking at this that highlights the less rational, less sure and less robust dimensions of capability, strength and independence, and instead considers the more defensive side of these ways of coping and practices of the self. Freud posited that we are all in a state of conflict with our loved ones as we try to reconcile the love we feel for them with our sense of disappointment and resulting anger over their inevitable failings. It is this conflict which lies at the heart of ambivalence and the reason why it can be very hard, even impossible, to accept such a conflict. Unconsciously we may substitute a conflict within ourselves for a conflict with the other (Hoggett 2001: 46). Pam Trevithick (1988) suggests that below working-class girls' and women's competence, independence and concern not to burden parents, there often lies the anxiety aroused by parents' lack of knowledge, a powerful anger that parents had nothing to give them, and a fear that there is nothing to stop them falling apart other than their 'outer armour'.

This puts another slant on the concept of the hybrid subject, who is not conceptualised as a unitary one, but as one that is created through the blurring, breaching and fragmentation of identity borders. For some, this contains the possibility for moving beyond the fixities of identity and culture to new political and personal spaces (Bhabha 1990). What I have tried to show through Holly

and Nicky's narratives is something that is not stressed in discourses of hybridity: that identity shifts also produce conflict between different parts of ourselves. Nicky saw herself as different from her cousins who mostly worked in low skill, low pay and low security jobs. She was determined not to 'end up like them'. At the same time, she did not want her uncle and cousins to see her as different to them and tried to guard herself against their verbal attacks. She felt very close to her parents, but was aware that going away to study had put distance between them. She was certain that she never wanted to live in her home town again – something that saddened her parents. Her mother and father were awed by the confidence and competence with which Nicky entered worlds that they knew nothing about and which made them anxious. Watching her enter them made them both anxious and proud. Nicky was in the process of crossing cultural and class boundaries, of becoming a hybrid class subject, but she had to do this alone, and in the face of significant emotional losses. As Hoggett (2003) asserts, it is at times like these, when parts of ourselves are at war with other parts, that we are clearly not unitary subjects – we may even be actively engaged in a destructive relationship towards other parts.

I am not suggesting that such defences are pathological. The defences Nicky and Holly exhibited were the very things that ensured that they got to and succeeded in higher education. The double bind is that these defences may have held aspects that were harmful to them emotionally at the same time as being essential to them practically.

It would be wrong to assume that if the working-class families of this study were to adopt some of the practices of the middle-class families that have been identified as supporting educational achievement, that this would unproblematically make for educational success (Gewirtz 2001). One of the main arguments of this thesis is that these practices are constituted psychically as well as socially, and furthermore, that psychic defence plays a large part in the shape and operation of family practices in relation to education. It would be deeply patronising and further pathologising therefore, to assume that the shape of psychic processes constructed in working-class individuals, families and communities should, in the best of all worlds, mirror those of the middle-

classes. I would suggest further that the mixture and kinds of identifications, dis-identifications and dissociations which helped Nicky and Holly to succeed may have provided a way of coping with the differences in practices, subject positions, modes of discourse, performance and regulation which they faced as they crossed borders and entered new territories. This kind of split and fragmented subjectivity in this analysis was necessary to cross the divide. Whether a new position, that of hybrid, was formed in the process is no simple matter, neither psychically nor socially.

Conclusion

The positive possibilities of hybridity continue to be debated. Does having to exist between competing identities mean that the hybrid subject has the best of both worlds, or that s/he is 'forced to live in the interface between the two' (Anzaldua 1987: 37). And what of the hybrid who moves back and forth between competing identities? Can the 'border-crosser' ever find a place or condition of her own and therefore some stability?

In this chapter I have employed two case-studies of working-class twenty-one year olds to examine the notion of hybridity, as put forward by cultural theorists in relation to new forms of ethnic subjectivities (Bhabha 1984; Hall 1993; Gilroy 1993). I have argued that while it is a useful concept for exploring more fully the multiple layers of experience of subjects in a context of shifting economic and social relations and adds another dimension to theories of fragmentation (Bradley 1996) there are, however, no easy hybrids. Some of the emotional dynamics in the working-class girls' families that have helped to sustain their success have been explored. The kinds of psychic defences that are used to deal with the difficult and contradictory feelings that entering and negotiating territories on which class and ethnic hybrid identities are constructed have also been discussed.

I have demonstrated how the uneasiness of hybridity in terms of social mobility through educational achievement for young women from the working-classes stems partly from the difficulties of negotiating the emotions, negative as well as

positive, that are aroused when aspiration and educational success mean becoming and being profoundly different to your family and peer group.

In the next chapter I focus more closely on the middle-class young women of *Project 4:21*, and, making links across all phases of the research, as well as building on arguments in Chapter Three about the making of the bourgeois subject, I look at what educational success means to them and their families and how it is produced. This analysis engages with of the questions that normalised notions of academic success and excellence cannot answer, namely, why was it so difficult for the middle-class young women to feel that they were good enough when they were clearly so academically successful, and what were the emotional costs for girls and young women who were pushed towards high performance?

CHAPTER SIX

ANXIOUS BRILLIANCE: EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS AND THE MIDDLE-CLASS GIRLS

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the middle-class girls and young women who took part in *Project 4:21*. Building on arguments made in previous chapters that were concerned with earlier phases of the study, in this chapter I examine the place of rationality and femininity in the making of the middle-class young women as bourgeois subjects. In Chapter Three I documented the kinds of domestic practices and interactional styles that middle-class mothers engaged in with their four year old daughters. I argued that through a number of transforming practices whereby work was turned into play, chores into pedagogic tasks, emotions into 'nice' or 'nasty' feelings, and, most important of all, conflict into rational argument, middle-class mothers became the guardians of 'normality'. Through these practices, their daughters were produced as ideal liberal democratic citizens. In the process, highly successful pupils were also produced - although there were some significant exceptions to this which I also explore in this chapter. My aim here is to demonstrate that what was so impressively achieved by these girls and their families was the production of practices through which the making of the bourgeois subject was guaranteed, and that this required a great deal of hard work on the part of a lot of people. It was not achieved easily or without a struggle, a struggle which defended against otherness, in particular the otherness typified by the working-class masses.

I begin by looking at the comparative dearth of research on middle-class, educationally successful pupils compared with that on working-class pupils. I then briefly revisit arguments made about the early practices of middle-class mothers in Chapter Three before examining the historical production of the bourgeois individual and the historically specific production of the middle-class girls as academically successful. Throughout the chapter I draw on data from

Project 4:21 to explore and understand the family and cultural practices, as well as individual psychic processes through which that success was accomplished. Through this empirical material I also cast light on the emotional costs involved, in particular how the young women lived the intersection of their intellectuality and femininity.

The Production of Middle-class Success

As the literature on middle-class pupils reveals, apart from some notable exceptions (Walford 1984, 1986, 1990; Delamont 1989; Allatt 1993; Roker 1993; Power 2000) there is remarkably little research on their experiences in the education system. Even more specifically, in relation to the experiences of middle-class girls, Frazer (1988) notes how:

> ...overwhelmingly researchers have concentrated on the experience and position of working-class girls, neglecting middle (let alone upper) class girls. Even research projects which include middle-class girls in the sample tend relatively to neglect them at the reporting stage. (Frazer 1988: 344)

Middle-class girls' educational 'success' seems to say it all, confirming the 'healthy normality' against which all other performances should be judged. But what does educational 'success' actually mean and what proportion of young people can therefore be said to be successful? How do we disentangle success within the normative process of education from the subjective meanings of 'success' in every other sphere of our lives? It is important to consider how, in the numerous strands of 'youth' research, educational performance is the starting point from which sociologists and psychologists go on to study the 'problems' of young people (Cohen and Ainley, 2000). In 'problem-centred' youth research, the assumption remains that those who are achieving well at school, staying on at school and going on to higher education, do not need to be explained. There is nothing more to say about them, they simply 'are', while the conviction that they are 'the norm' renders them invisible.

In Chapter Three I critically examined the practices of some of the middle-class

families. Why should I want to do this when they clearly work, producing success for their daughters? I would argue that the very fact that there has been so little written about middle-class youth, and especially middle-class girls, makes it important to take a much closer look at their experiences. Bates and Riseborough (1993) point to the importance of considering how the invisibility of the 'conformist' in educational research has lead to a 'theoretical trivialisation of the process of their schooling. '[And]... is all the more remarkable given the centrality of the concepts of social and cultural reproduction in the armoury for understanding schooling and society' (Riseborough 1993: 121). It is my contention that social scientists interested in examining the processes through which systems of stratification are produced, reproduced and transformed cannot do so by focusing only on one section of what may be described as the 'class continuum'. An understanding of the production of disadvantage requires a corresponding investigation of the production of privilege. As Power states:

> Unlike the very few 'wealthy and powerful', whose assets are such that privilege can be passed down irrespective of external accreditation, members of the middle-class largely depend upon the credential bestowed by the education system to acquire or hold on to their position. (Power 2000: 133)

Sarah Delamont's study, based on a Scottish girls' public school, with data collected between 1969-75, is one of the few detailed discussions of middle-class girls' education (Delamont 1989). As she points out

> The lives of middle-class girls at home and at school are probably the least researched topic in the whole of the sociology of education, despite being the group who have been, over the last century, the most influential group in rearing and marrying the men who are the most successful products of the British education system.' (Delamont 1989: 61)

In more recent years it is middle-class girls who are viewed as the success story of our education system: indeed, given the furore about their success relative to boys, too successful for some in this changed economy. What guidelines therefore are offered by Delamont's study, conducted over twenty years ago for the research presented in this thesis? Delamont categorised the girls of her study into two groups: daughters of the intelligentsia (professionals, the new middle-class), and daughters of the bourgeoisie (business people,

entrepreneurial, managerial, the old middle-class). The academic girls came from professional families and were highly regarded by the school. The others were less concerned with academic attainment, and, had less status within the school, possibly because their parents had 'money rather than class'. As Delamont put it

> the debs and dollies - were from entrepreneurial homes (the old middle-class in Bernstein's (1977) terms), and St Luke's was preparing them to take their place in that sector of the Scottish elite. The swots and weeds... were representative of Bernstein's 'new' middle-class, and were preparing to enter the intellectual elite of the country. (Delamont 1989: 58)

Delamont argued that it was the intellectual group who had more cultural capital and were therefore more set to succeed through their own efforts in the bourgeois world rather than by making a good marriage. This is interesting in the light of *Project 4:21* where almost all of the middle-class girls achieved high examination results. If the middle-class girls and young women of *Project 4:21* are categorised in the same way as Delamont's sample, according to parental occupations, all of them come from the new and none from the old middle-class, which reflects both the sampling criteria used by Tizard and Hughes (1984) but also the change in class composition from the time of Delamont's study. In addition to this, three of the young women classified as middle-class, Penny, Gill and Julie, all came from upwardly mobile working-class families, in which their parents were the first generation to go on to higher education or join a profession.

Delamont explains her findings with reference to Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital to conceptualise the way in which the middle-classes are reproduced (Bourdieu 1984). This is relevant when examining the place both of rationality and of the feminine in the making of the bourgeois subject, a subject who, in fact, typifies the norm of the modern subject and who possesses certain characteristics which appear as 'middle-class' but are not confined to the middle-class (Rose 1991; Henriques et al 1998). In this analysis, the technologies of the social produce modes of power and regulation through which a particular kind of subject is produced at a particular historical moment.

Additionally, I wish to argue that the academic success of middle-class girls is historically specific. Given that there have been so few studies of the middle-classes, it is relevant to note how difficult it was even to address this issue. Throughout the research and analysis of the data, I have continued a process of 'making strange' things which on the surface and often within popular and/or traditional discourses are 'taken for granted' and therefore do not seem to require an explanation (Bourdieu 1984; Smith 1988; also see Chapter Two). Part of this involved asking what success meant and what was invested in its production. For instance, high educational performance and achievement for girls is presented as an indisputably good thing, which on some levels it may well be, certainly in terms of the production of more certainty and the maintenance of financial and social location. But this certainty could also be understood as operating against it's other: failure, dependence, loss of money, position, status. The strategy of academic success can therefore also be understood as a defence against failure and uncertainty. In Chapter Two I discussed Hoggett's idea that we are living in a culture that is in flight from dependency, where subjects are incited to view and make themselves through discourses of the 'ideal' citizen-consumer, autonomous and self-sufficient, and where contradictory aspects of experience (i.e of dependency and failure) cannot be tolerated within the self, or within society. For some, the possibility of such elements being part of experience are so anxiety-provoking, that they are instead projected onto all those others who cannot (or will not) be independent, autonomous and successful (Hoggett 2000).

When myself and June Melody, the co-researcher on *Project 4:21*, interviewed the middle-class girls we became aware of a growing sense of our own confusion and contradiction: we were presented with apparently seamless success but at one and the same time deep anxieties came to the surface, anxieties which increasingly seemed to underpin that very performance. This suggested that the educational success itself was part of a defensive organisation. However, within a celebratory discourse of girls attainment in the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries, there is little room to make sense

of the defences which produced that performance.

The middle-class family narratives told the same story of outstanding examination results, university and intended professional career paths. Of the twenty-one year olds, 93 per cent of the middle-class young women were engaged in or had completed a higher education course (all at degree level) compared to 22 per cent of the working-class young women (and only 17 per cent of these were studying at degree level). 87 per cent of middle-class girls followed an undeviating pathway, moving from GCSEs to A levels to Honours degrees, while 44 per cent of the working-class girls left school at sixteen and had no plans to return to education in the near future. The homogeneity of the middle-class girls' educational pathways would seem to contradict theories of individualisation which assert that we can no longer understand educational experiences in terms of class-based divisions (Beck 1992). Indeed, the similarities between them were so striking that a sense of them not only following well-trodden paths but of being on a conveyor belt was strongly evoked. Educational experiences may have become more diverse, but this is a diversification which has impacted most powerfully on the working-class girls (see Chapters Four and Eight).

Among the middle-class sample, it was the daughters of parents from working-class backgrounds who themselves had been the first in their families to go through higher education or, as in the case of Penny's father, join a profession via a more informal route, who constituted a distinct group. Penny, Julie and Gill all deviated from the norm of the other middle-class girls in that they were not able to sustain their footing on this tightly circumscribed educational path. Gill did badly at GCSE and dropped out of school altogether at sixteen and had not returned to education at twenty-one; Julie also did badly at school and left at sixteen to train as a dancer, which she then gave up; Penny's otherwise good performance faltered at A level and later she gave up her first degree after only one term. Importantly however, both Julie and Penny did regain their educational footing and went on to successfully complete university degrees.

Why should these three young women be different from the other middle-class girls? This cannot be explained by differences in wealth or the social position of their parents, except perhaps for Gill, whose mother was a single parent. There is a need therefore to look at the effect that the class transition made by their parents had on the psychic lives of their daughters. Evidence from other work (see Chapter Five, on academically successful working-class girls), suggests that emotional problems are associated with class transition through education, problems which manifest themselves as problems of identity. This appears to have been in some way - not necessarily consciously - transmitted to the daughters of these upwardly mobile parents, since the daughters' success is, at best, ambivalent. For Gill, who became a New Age Traveller and lived in a converted bus with her partner, it led to a conscious identification with the poor and transient. Gill eked out a living doing seasonal agricultural work and busking, but was the object of strenuous and persistent police surveillance, as well as hostility from local communities, and was continually moved from place to place. In a simple sense, these young women were not 'reproducing' anything certain that had gone on before, and they revealed the inherent instability in becoming the embodiment of the bourgeois subject.

Reason and emotion in the production of the post-Enlightenment subject

In Chapter Three I argued that when the middle-class girls were four years old, there were a number of practices in which the girls and their mothers engaged that were specific to this group. For example, the lack of clear boundaries between work and play, the turning of domestic work into educative play and the importance of rational argument, as a means of power for the young girls themselves. Alongside this was the turning of passionate emotions into nice and nasty feelings, sensible and silly behaviour.

It was also argued that rationality in the form of reasonable, intellectualised argument, was a central strategy in the regulation of the middle-class girls, alongside the turning of passionate emotions into feelings (see Chapter Three). To understand why these particular practices were widespread we need to look

not only at the recent history of class, education and psychology, but also at the way in which the rational and the feminine have been understood in the move towards the production of a rationally ordered bourgeois liberal democracy. Walkerdine and the Girls and Mathematics Unit (1989) argued that:

> ideas about reason and reasoning cannot be understood historically outside considerations of gender. Since the Enlightenment, if not before, the Cartesian concept of reason has been deeply embroiled in attempts to control nature. Rationality was taken as a kind of rebirth of the thinking self, without the intervention of a woman. The rational self was a profoundly masculine one from which woman was excluded, her powers not only inferior but also subservient. The 'thinking' subject was male; the female provided the biological prop both to procreation and to servicing the possibility of 'man'. Philosophical doctrine was transformed into the object of a science in which reason became a capacity invested within the body, and later mind, of man alone. (Walkerdine and the Girls and Mathematics Unit 1989: 27)

Foucault (1979) calls such developments 'fictions which function in truth'. They are not essential truths about science or men or women, but because they became enshrined, at least from the nineteenth century, in scientific debates about rationality, science and woman, especially the science of woman, then they become understood as matters of fact, statements that could safely be made and empirically supported about women and about reason. It was during the nineteenth century that 'human nature' became the object of scientific enquiry and the female body and mind the object of a deeply patriarchal scientific gaze. Ideas about female nature included a female body suffused (from the hysteria of the womb) with madness, irrationality, whereas the upper and middle-class white male body was the natural embodiment of the rational mind: a rationality not only naturally given, but deeply necessary to the civilising process. Europe, with its immense colonial powers, produced itself as the natural progenitor of civilization, keeping at bay the hordes of primitive, animal irrationality, be it invested in colonial peoples or the European masses.

Following Walkerdine and the Girls and Mathematics Unit (1989) I wish to argue that the 'truth' about rationality embodied a deeply held fantasy of its opposition to the powers of unreason, everything contained within that fantasy from the masses, to colonial peoples, the mad, women etc. Bhabha (1984)

conceptualises this well when he writes of the 'fear, phobia and fetish' with which colonial peoples were viewed in the discourses of the coloniser. Not only is reasoning held to be a supreme and important power for the production and maintenance of a particular form of government, but this form holds within it deep fears about Otherness, the price to be paid for the loss of reason, the fall off the edge of the bourgeoisie. Foucault argued that alongside the rise in human and social sciences there was a change in power and government, in which population management became a central and strategic mode of government (Henriques et al 1998). This ties in with what sociologists have described as the rise of the 'new middle-class' (Bernstein 1977; Abercrombie and Urry 1983; McNall et al 1991), that is a professional class, who are central to management and government of a liberal democracy in which power operates not through coercion but by autonomy, free will, choice. Thus, it can be seen that as well as the middle-class as owners of capital, the professions become important for the management of neo-liberalism. The professions of course must have a strong and clear grasp of reason, above all else in order to for them to take their place as the governors of those others.

In all of this it is difficult to understand how women, who became the object of science should become the bearers of rationality. Walkerdine and the Girls and Mathematics Unit argued that girls and the feminine were understood as antithetical to the playful, masculine child of reason, yet also necessary in order to provide the essential feminine caring context in which rational development could occur (1989). This is precisely what the mothers of the middle-class girls did: not only did they provide the basis for rational argument, but they also neutralised difficult emotions. Emotions can be understood as part of the irrational, the dreaded animal passions. It follows therefore that the bourgeoisie has to tame these in some way. This is just what the middle-class mothers did. But what has happened in the last twenty years which has allowed these girls to become rational subjects, taking their places in the professions once occupied by men? Feminism has stressed the possibility that women can accomplish the same as men and has fought long and hard for the erosion of sexism. This has had particular effects in the education of girls and the entry of women into

middle-class occupations.

However, the entry of the middle-class girls into masculine norms of rational academic excellence comes at a price. It is not achieved easily at all and indeed is produced out of the suppression of aspects of femininity and sexuality (Walkerdine et al 2001). In that sense, the discourses of 'girl power', which stress the possibility of having and being what you want, provide an ideal which it is almost impossible to live up to, but through which young women read their own failure as personal pathology:

> I had musicianship classes, orchestra, I actually had more orchestra, choir, quartet, quintet, piano lessons, violin lessons (....) if you do something and you don't do it well, well, I didn't do it well, you didn't want people to think that I couldn't do something well. If I can't...if I couldn't do it well I wouldn't do it at all.
> Hannah, 16 year old, white, middle-class

The production of excellence

I have already documented some of the work that went into preparing the four year olds. Tizard and Hughes (1984) maintained that nursery school staff paid far more attention to the language styles of the middle-class girls, thus reinforcing what had already gone on in the home. At ten, the middle-class girls' performance already so far outstripped that of the working-class sample, that performance in the top working-class school was worse than the bottom middle-class one (see Chapter Four). In addition to this, a majority of families had already taken their daughters out of state schools and put them into preparatory schools in the Girls Public Day School Trust (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989) - all single-sex schools. In co-educational state schools boys were viewed as taking the place of playful rationality, whilst girls were seen as working hard. However, in the girls public schools, top-performing girls were assigned and able to take up playful rationality as part of their subject positioning, which meant that they behaved and were treated far more like the boys in the state schools. Furthermore, excellence was simply the expected norm. Nobody was supposed to do poorly and girls were expected to work as hard as it took to produce excellence. Anything else was simply considered to be failure.

This expectation of high attainment presented a puzzle to me; after all, I was used to understanding excellent performance as exceptional, to be praised and congratulated, not regarded as ordinary and unworthy of comment. This was in contrast to the elaborate praise accorded to the working-class girls over performance that was far, far inferior, performance which would have been the object of ridicule or shame in middle-class households. The example of Angela, a middle-class twenty-one year old and her younger sister Heather given in Chapter Two is illustrative of this point. Heather's examination performance was considered too poor to fit her for an academic career, even though she achieved eight GCSEs and two A levels (all grades A to C). Contrast this with the case of Jacky, a twenty-one year old working-class young woman who left school at sixteen whose father is proud of her achieving seven GCSEs grades D to G. Why it should have been the case that only the highest performance would do and anything less produces such distress in middle-class parents. What function does excellence serve and how is it achieved?

What I found was that the majority of the middle-class girls' educational lives had been rigidly circumscribed by expectations of academic success, often to such an extent that it was difficult for them to feel that they had done well by getting ten grade A GCSEs and four A levels.

> I actually complained to them (*parents*) a few times about not feeling like I had any kind of recognition for my achievements, it was just like that it was expected that that's what was going to happen and I was going to do well and we didn't need to talk about it because it was just a foregone conclusion
> Abigail, 21 year old, white middle-class (my italics)

Hannah, a white middle-class sixteen year old, achieved nine A grades and one C grade at GCSE:

> And I was really pleased. Yes, I hoped that I'd get a B in science, I knew I wouldn't get an A but I hoped to get a B but I was really pleased to get a C. And... so I rang up my mum And I said 'Oh, mum I got a C.' And she said, 'Oh, well, congratulations on the As anyway.' Fine. Bye.

It is, in fact, difficult to overemphasise the way in which very high academic

performance was routinely understood as ordinary and simply the level that was expected. This and its attendant anxieties, was one of the major concomitants for the understanding of middle-class girls' educational attainment.

Working-class girls who had achieved far poorer GCSE results received much praise from their parents, and seemed to take a pride in their own achievements. However, with regard to the middle-class girls we have an opposite situation. In contrast, middle-class girls, many of whom achieved outstanding examination results – typically much higher grades than even the most successful working-class girls – found it considerably more difficult to be proud of their performance, or to hold on to a sense of what they had achieved. These girls expressed anxiety about their educational performance when they were ten years old, and this anxiety had largely remained with them during the intervening years – believing that they were not 'good enough', despite the evidence of their grades. Angela was studying medicine at a top university:

> (....) it's difficult at Oxford because you've got the, kind of, top few people from every school in the country, and I mean, I was in the top five or ten at school, but it's so different. I mean, you're always kind of, in the middle. I just try and stay in the top middle (untrans). I mean they're so quick on the uptake, it makes you feel, that's the one thing that's bad about it, it makes me feel a bit stupid sometimes. I mean some of these people are just so amazingly bright, you just think, 'God, I shouldn't be here, I shouldn't be with people like that at all'.

If we accept that a complex relation between preparation for the labour market and the production of practices of subjection and subjectivity are central to the processes of schooling, then we must also recognise that a significant part of the work of achieving high performance must be carried out on an emotional level. Despite the evidence of their success, feelings of not being good enough were endemic among the young middle-class women[1]. These anxieties typically surfaced as an individual pathology, an indication that the young women had internalised this failure as a personal one that could only be overcome by working harder and harder. Very few of the middle-class girls made sustained

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[1] West and Sweeting (2003) reported high levels of worry amongst middle-class, high-achieving girls. These included concerns about academic performance and weight.

connections between their own sense of inadequacy and their social and economic location. It was difficult for them to step outside of this individualising discourse precisely because doing so would threaten to expose and undermine the sense of rightness and impenetrable normality contained in following a strictly circumscribed educational trajectory which would be understood as 'naturally' leading to a professional career. For the middle-class girls in the sample, failure was simply not an available option: whatever else happened, they were compelled to succeed educationally. It is in the context of their production as proto-professional subjects that the middle-class girls had to prove themselves to be self-regulating, a process that began in the early years and one which was integral to, and inextricable from the processes through which this level of educational success had to be achieved (Allatt 1993; Reay 1998a). This placed them in a psychic dilemma: to struggle with the feeling that one is not good enough, alongside the equally powerful feeling that one cannot fail could be expected to lead to both difficult psychic consequences. However, the routine nature of that success and the apparent ease with which middle-class girls like Angela, Naomi and Charlotte consistently performed well above the average, may have masked deep fears around failure, fears which were driven underground because they so threatened the very bases on which available subject positions were founded.

It was common for teachers in the schools the middle-class girls attended at ten to consistently use terms such as 'natural ability' to describe top pupils, but at the same time, these terms were rarely used to describe high performing girls, even girls like Angela, who at ten were doing very well in terms of their test scores and the teachers rating. An opposition between 'flair', 'ability' and 'hard work' was set up; an opposition which frequently down-graded the 'quality' of girls' good performance because it was not produced in the right way (Walden and Walkerdine 1985; Walkerdine and Lucey 1989). Child centred discourses of learning implicitly contrast the 'old 'ways of hard work and rule-following with 'new' concepts of development, activity and discovery. The implications of this are serious - suggesting that children who make their work visible are lacking in those very qualities of 'flair', 'ability' and 'brilliance' which are most prized in the

production of good performance. Paradoxically, while 'hard work' was used pejoratively for the middle-class girls, it was praised in the working-class schools.

At ten, Angela's teacher said of her: 'If she comes across something new it needs to be explained to her whereas some of these will just be able to read what they're to do and do it'. Angela was certainly a 'good' girl and an 'ideal pupil' and indeed her performance throughout her education was outstanding. Isn't it all the more extraordinary that she should never have been attributed with 'flair', but as a good girl who only came top through sheer hard work? Extraordinary yes, but by looking back to what was said about her as a child, we can begin to understand how and why girls like Angela consistently denied themselves the accolade 'clever'. At twenty-one, Angela had introjected the 'truths' told to her about her performance; that it could only be sustained by the kind of unremitting, exhausting and anxiety-provoking labour which she did indeed display. The opposition between flair and hard work she encountered at primary school continued to exert its influence into higher education. In the intensely competitive environment of medical school, being seen to be working hard signified a lack of brilliance and so had to be denied and hidden[2].

> And then it's a kind of big competition and a game you need to make out they've done the least work and get the best results. Which I find quite hard. I mean, I don't work that hard, but I do need to put quite a few hours into an essay.
> Angela, 21 year old, white middle-class

This kind of new professional femininity is not produced through a simplistic and easy notion of a female future, but through the painful struggle of constant re-invention. What looks easy on the surface is devastating beneath. In Chapter Eight, I discuss how women cannot easily perform masculinity in the workplace, so it is just as difficult to do so in the classroom. Girls are damned if they do attempt to be assertive, facing being described pejoratively, and damned if they don't.

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[2] Evidence suggests that boys too must present their achievements at school as 'effortless' in front of their peers (Aggleton Martino 1999; Lucey and Reay 2002a).

Many of the middle-class mothers (including Angela's) pushed their daughters to intellectualise to a very high degree when they were four, and when I met with them at later phases of the research these young women had, for the most part, succeeded in the education system. And yet there was taken (either by themselves or their teachers) to be something wrong with how some of them had achieved that success. It is not surprising then that they were anxious about their performance, an anxiety that their teachers did not or could not see when the girls were ten.

There is something else to be added to 'hard work'. For the sixteen and twenty-one year old middle-class girls and their parents, working hard, particularly at school was constantly stressed and while the working-class parents and girls also spoke of the necessity of hard work, its object was different. Here, hard work was something which had to be done to ensure that one was presented as a willing worker, one who would be employed and paid. For the middle-class families, hard work was necessary to ensure the continuity of privilege in times of economic uncertainty, and when men and marriage could not be relied upon to solve the problem of the maintenance of class status and lifestyle in the new and uncertain labour market (Beck 1992). On an unconscious level, did their constant hard work also offset the guilt of privilege, becoming a 'virtue' that would allow them to enjoy the fruits of success without the aftertaste of guilt?

Black and Asian Middle-class girls

Serious inequalities in relation to the educational achievements of black, Asian and other non-white ethnic youth in Britain continue to be of concern to educationalists (Mirza 1992; Griffiths and Troyna 1995; Sewell 1997; Tomlinson 1999). Amongst the middle-class sample there were two young Asian women; Atiya, twenty-one years old whose family was from Pakistan, and Satinder, sixteen years old, whose family were from India.[3] Although the group of black

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[3] There were two working-class African-Caribbean girls and two African-Caribbean-white British mixed-race girls in the sample.

and Asian young women was small and it is difficult to make generalisations, I can raise some observations relating to the complex intersections of 'race', class and gender within the sample. As with class, qualitative work in the field of 'race' and education concentrates on the problems of underachievers from minority ethnic groups, with far less attention being paid to successful pupils. Gillborn and Gipps in their review of educational research on the achievements of minority ethnic pupils argue that when information on pupils' social class background is collected, there is usually a direct relationship with academic achievement; the higher the social class, the higher the achievement (1996:16).

Sudbury (1998) presents an analysis of British black women's achievements in education and employment which demonstrates similar tensions to those I have explored in relation to the white British community. She argues that there is a popular black discourse presented in newspapers like the 'Voice' that "African Caribbean women are doing better than 'our' men" (p156). She argues that this is often attributed not to the men's lower qualifications but women's lower levels of aggressivity and their willingness to

> ...put up with the everyday racist backbiting endemic to educational institutions and office environments shared with white people. Accordingly African Caribbean women's advances in the field of education and employment are presented as the outcome of their willingness to ignore hostility in return for qualifications, status and money. (p157)

This hostility to black women's success is further elaborated by the easy slippage from successful career woman to single mother/matriarch:

> The assumption that African Caribbean women are 'doing better' in educational and economic terms is frequently meshed with gender politics to create a discourse which resonates with black male insecurities. The complement of the professional woman who dominates the office is the single mother who dominates the household. Resentment toward socially mobile professional women can therefore be seen to build on the ambiguous feelings of men of African descent towards single mothers who are portrayed simultaneously as the 'backbone' of the community and as matriarchs denying African Caribbean men their rightful position as heads of households. (p158)

Sudbury also recognises the difficult and important class divisions which exist between black women. In *Project 4:21* the singularity of direction and purpose

which characterised the majority of the middle-class girls' educational routes or pathways or of the expectations which shaped them was undisturbed by 'race'.

> It was always I would do my A levels and go to university, get a job, travel, get married and have kids or whatever.
> Satinder, 16 year old, Indian middle-class

Black feminist writers have argued that in the UK, black people are mostly viewed as a homogeneous group, as automatically working-class, a universalising process which prevents class differences from emerging (Reynolds 1998; Sudbury 1998). Using the category 'race' can also serve to mask deep historical, cultural and religious differences and divisions within and between black, Asian and other minority ethnic groups in Britain (Mirza 1992). Satinder's and Atiya's families were both engaged in class processes which appear on the surface to be very similar. Atiya, whose parents were educated professionals, came from a family which had occupied a social position in Pakistan which would be understood as middle-class in Britain. Despite this privileged position in Pakistan, the powerful and endemic circulation of racist discourses and practices throughout British institutions - social and professional – presented the possibility of a serious erosion of previously held class advantages, and Atiya's parents had therefore faced the threat of downward social mobility through emigration to Britain, although Atiya's father was a well-established member of the medical profession at the time of the research. Satinder's father had been a village school teacher in India; a job that carried some social status but little financial reward. He was not a graduate himself and decided against teacher training in Britain because of financial restrictions. He also felt that at that time job prospects for teachers in the UK were not good. Instead, he and Satinder's mother put their energy into developing small businesses; first running a post-office and then a nursing home. Emigration for this family represented an opportunity to engage in a process of upward mobility through expanding businesses *and* investment in their children's education.

What is interesting in the case of Satinder and Atiya is how both of their fathers pushed them towards taking science subjects at A level so that they could go

on to study medicine, and therefore progress into secure, high status professional employment, despite both daughters being much more interested in, and in Satinder's case especially, showing more aptitude for arts subjects. Atiya, who did achieve the kinds of grades needed to get into a high-status medical school, wanted to do an Arts degree, but was heavily persuaded out of this with a promise that she could do all of those things after she qualified.

> They were keen that I had a very academic career, because I wanted to do journalism to start with and anthropology and all sorts of things like that, and they said - it's a typical Asian thing - they want me to do a very vocational career and like get a skill, so that I'm always self-sufficient, so that's the only other thing there's been clashes about. But in the end I did what they wanted me to do and I did medicine. But then they've always agreed that when I've finished the degree I can do whatever I like. So I'm just waiting to finish the degree now.
> Atiya, 21 year old, Pakistani middle-class

This focus on medicine and the medical sciences began early; when Satinder was six years old her father spoke of wanting her to study biology, maths, physics and chemistry when she got older. Both sets of parents stressed the importance of a university education that would provide academic and professional qualifications *and* vocational skills that could be taken anywhere in the world and, as Atiya's father said, be marketed at short notice - both of which are essential for the migrant's survival. Some research suggests that pupils and parents of minority ethnic backgrounds demonstrate a greater commitment to education and value qualifications more highly; young people from ethnic minority backgrounds report more parental encouragement to remain in education (Drew et al 1992). Satinder's parents were very keen that all their children should develop professional lives, which included entrepreneurialism:

> We would prefer her to, yes, to go into medicine or pharmacy, as probably we might give her some finance help to develop her private business or anything like that. So that's in my mind anyway, put it that way.
> Satinder's father

The very idea of becoming a doctor, psychiatrist or pharmacist seemed to articulate the desire and necessity to achieve the fragile project of becoming the Western bourgeois subject within the constraints of racism and racist

practices. Gewirtz et al argue that some recent immigrants to Britain may 'possess considerable cultural capital, but that it is in the wrong currency' (Gewirtz et al 1995). For Atiya's and Satinder's parents perhaps their daughters joining a prestigious, status-conscious profession such as medicine represented a means to convert some of their cultural capital into the right currency in order to more effectively compete in educational and labour markets (Mac an Ghaill 1988).

Clever and feminine

Of course, academic excellence is what so completely ensures the production and reproduction of the new middle-class. It gets the girls places in the right universities and makes sure that they do well there, getting the right jobs afterwards. Only excellence, in difficult economic times will act as enough of an insurance: after all graduate unemployment is high and competition fierce.

The road to be trodden by these young women is successful certainly, but straight and circumscribed indeed. To attain this goal, they have to play a balancing act in relation to cleverness and femininity. To maintain an acceptable subject position in both requires performance not only as an academic, but also in being feminine. To my eyes, many of them at first glance appeared to have had everything. They were brainy, successful and extremely good-looking: a fantasy of 'girl-power' indeed! Perhaps, for these young women, the elaborate displays of femininity (good looking, great social life, plenty of boyfriends) were a defence against the pain and fear that clever as they were, they were not necessarily successful enough at all.

There were several examples of girls' anxiety connected to trying to be clever and feminine, sometimes pushed to extremes, such as Naomi who pulled her hair out, but who did not see herself as being allowed to do anything other than do well and go to a good university. In fact, despite her quite extreme emotional problems, she achieved ten grade A GCSE's, two grades As and one B at A level and went on to Oxbridge, feeling that she was not allowed to fail. Her

mother said that the staff at her expensive private school simply did not pay much attention to her emotional problems, caring more that she should achieve the highest academic standards. Being feminine cannot be allowed to interfere with academic success, indeed nothing can. This was illustrated by the difference in working and middle-class attitudes to pregnancy and motherhood (Walkerdine et al 2001). Working-class parents were more accepting of the idea of their daughters becoming pregnant, and of a baby in the household, if that was what the girl wanted. The middle-class girls and their parents found it much harder to contemplate a baby. Several girls mentioned that having a baby would 'kill' one of their parents. So birth was equated not with the beginning of life, with something new, but with the end of it, with dying.

Nothing was allowed to get in the way of ambition (and the dreaded drop into the abyss that it defends against). Indeed, anybody who had a problem with academic success was immediately presented with any number of costly therapeutics to allay the problem and produce the hoped-for success. In the comparison of the treatment of and attitude towards Naomi's anxieties and those of Kerry, a working-class girl, in Chapter Four, the difference in subjectification and investments becomes clear.

For Naomi and her parents, the high grades that she achieved were simply expected, not exceptional. While Naomi's parents felt that they had not pressured her, her interviews made it clear that she felt extremely pushed to high performance (which was simply the norm) and that this anxiety manifested itself as both hair pulling and anorexia, about which the school took little notice. The time of her school success was, in fact, the very time at which Naomi hated the available images of herself:

> ...all the pictures of myself there I absolutely hate at that time, I just really look so awful, and that one [looking at photos of herself] I seem quite happy but - like, I mean, quite sort of smiling and - but I think I felt really drained after.

The production of the middle-class girl as the rational bourgeois subject requires a huge investment. The right kind of schooling has to be provided, in which she will be made to feel that exceptional performance is merely ordinary

and that this performance, therefore, is never enough. She may also be made to feel that femininity is to be struggled over, sometimes renouncing sexuality, because the onset of womanhood is too painful when pitted against the extraordinary academic efforts the girl has to make. So, it is not difficult to see that the anxiety displayed by so many of these girls at ten had escalated. Some coped with it, but others did not and professionals had to be brought in to help so that the girl could be kept on track. Sometimes, as with Naomi, she was kept on track even though she was clearly disturbed. What, one may ask, would she actually have had to do to herself to be allowed to get off the conveyer belt? Certainly anorexia and pulling her hair out were not enough for anybody to give her permission to stop.

What was the huge psychic and economic investment then, which went into making these young women into the bourgeois individual? Why did they have to succeed at all costs? Why was their emotional state at all times subsumed to rationality, to excellence, to brilliance? I suggest that the huge investment in success covers over the terror of its opposite. That what was defended against here was the fear of falling off the edge of middle-class life and culture, of falling off the edge of rationality and into the darkness of those held to be in the pit of unreason, the dark forces of the masses and the equally dark forces of their own passionate desires, so easily projected onto 'the great unwashed'. If nobody could let rationality go, there must have been some powerful emotions being denied, and it was so easy to locate them in all of those feared Others who appear to threaten civilization. After all, if the working-class is rapidly splintering and changing, with part of it becoming the non-working underclass, with the middle-class containing a defence against falling off the edge, these young women's impossible rebellion must carry all those defences - they cannot be allowed to be seen to fail. It does seem as if their only trajectory is to become both very clever and very beautiful. So gender can become a performance, a masquerade, a set of practices and bodily dispositions, now realised by the 'I can have everything' girls (Riviere 1985). Yet this heady normality, this utopic success, hides the opposite, the defences against failure, the terrible defence against the impossibility that the supergirl identity

represents.

Mother's work

Their mothers were the sensitive mothers who were indeed the facilitators of the knower, the rational and autonomous child of child-centredness. When their daughters were four, they were mostly employed, if at all, in the lowest levels of professional work. This changed over the course of their daughters' growing up and most of them entered full-time professional work. What is often covered over, as was pointed out in *Democracy in the Kitchen* (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989) is the work that the women put into producing their own housework as playful learning *and*, the effect this had on themselves. The mothers in the study turned routine activities such as cleaning a fish tank or making the muesli into the basis of an invisible pedagogy, one which taught their daughters to argue for their own power through the use of reason, even to the detriment of their mothers, who could sometimes be rather oppressed by these 'suburban terrorists' and which allowed them to talk of nice or nasty feelings, but tended to reason them away rather than allow them to be expressed and contained. At twenty-one, their daughters were set to enter the professions themselves, to become the bearers of that bourgeois rationality. How those early lessons served them as they grew up and what effect they had on their view of their mothers' lives in comparison with their dreams for their own lives are questions that I explore in Chapter Eight.

Most of the middle-class mothers had had their children at a relatively young age and then struggled later to develop a career and bring up children at the same time. It is this pattern which their daughters often speak about wanting to avoid. Liz, whose mother worked and studied law when the children were young said, 'I just saw how much hard work it was [laughs], I don't know if I really want that much hard work.' There was also the knowledge that despite mothers having full-time jobs, there was little redistribution of domestic labour in terms of gender.

> And she has, my Dad works really hard, he's quite a workaholic. Because he's such a perfectionist, everything has to be right, so he

> spends hours in the office and so my mother basically has to run the household and keep a job going and look after the children, all by herself. So that's quite stressful.
> Liz, 21 year old, white, middle-class

These daughters had seen how difficult their mothers' lives had been and did not want to repeat this pattern. This is interesting because their mothers in fact put so much invisible work into providing them with the sensitive learning environment considered necessary to produce the bourgeois rational subject. In the following discussion Naomi's mother looked back on that time:

> Mother: I don't know, well when I first started working I think I sort of thought 'well' I'll...um. I don't know quite, I didn't think it through. Because I also always, I got married as I started work, and so I was always going to have children, but I sort of, somehow always thought I would be capable of being head of, definitely being head of department, head, whatever. I enjoyed it.
> HL: So what held you back in reaching that?
> Mother: 'Cos I've um, well, put more into the family
> HL: Mmm, you've got more demands at home
> Mother: Yes, a lot. I've got four children and there's no way I would put myself through, um, I mean going for it in a career way, at all.

The mothers' invisible work was clearly a huge investment in their daughters' futures, one which offered important returns now that the economic situation was changing to accommodate greater female participation in the professional labour market.

As has been demonstrated elsewhere, professional men have been feeling threatened by the increasing numbers of women who are doing well educationally and entering the professional and business labour market (Adkins 2001). This has been met with a post-feminist assertion of 'girl power' and of the idea of an active and powerful femininity, which is sexually assertive. This cultural and discursive trend fits well with the growing opportunities for women to progress into the rationally ordered public space. Indeed, such a discursive field describes well how many of the middle-class young women wanted to present themselves and to be understood.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have focused on the middle-class young women and families who took part in *Project 4:21* to explore another under-illuminated facet of the story of young women's educational and social success in turn of the century Britain. This chapter mapped the history of the middle-class girls from when they were young children at home with their mothers, through to primary school and onto higher education, and in doing so, charted the twin history of the development of the bourgeois feminine subject.

The majority of middle-class girls in the study have done extremely well at school, have gone on to 'good' universities, and were preparing, at the time of the study to enter the professions. I have argued that although girls can, in principle, now take up educational and professional positions previously accorded to their brothers only, their production as bourgeois subject is a huge struggle and is never simply nor entirely achieved and not without penalties for both body and mind.

A central theme of this thesis is that of change – that the girls who took part in *Project 4:21* have grown up in a period of speedy transformation at all levels of public and private, local and global society. One of the effects of these changes, has been the erosion of traditional working-class occupations and the rise of white-collar, service industries, with a massive expansion of managerial and professional jobs. The following chapter addresses the question of social class as a site of identity inside this changed sociality and economy.

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CHAPTER SEVEN
IDENTITY AND SOCIAL CLASS

Introduction

A central theme of this thesis is the question of how transformations in the social world have made new demands on subjects, and the ways in which girls and women in particular, have been required to remake themselves psychologically and socially in such a changed world. During the late 1980s and 1990s, it was argued by some sociologists and politicians of the left and right, that one of the consequences of these transformations was the 'death of class' as a meaningful conceptual tool (Gorz 1982; Pakulski and Waters 1996) or identity category (Giddens 1990; Beck 1992). I do not concur with this view, as is clear from the central place of social class both in the methodology of *Project 4:21* and my analysis of the data from that study. However, while the traditional sites and practices through which classed identities were constituted for many years have declined and changed, new ones have arisen: manufacturing industries have been replaced by a vast and diverse service sector (as discussed in Chapter Eight). In what ways do subjects who previously understood themselves as working-class, now experience their class location?

The main aim of this chapter is to bring the psychosocial perspective that I outlined in Chapter One to bear on an analysis of how personal lives and social class are mutually constituted both psychically and socially; to look at the ways in which social class is lived and *dynamically* shaped through an interplay of subjective and structural, emotional and economic, political and cultural dimensions. I wish to show the ways in which personhood is understood through classed categories, and also how class intersects with other identity categories such as gender, 'race' and ethnicity. This I do through an analysis of the narratives of the working-class and middle-class young women and parents who took part in *Project 4:21.*

There are several interrelated strands to the argument that I put forward here: firstly, that social class, while its existence is denied in some quarters, is

explicitly and implicitly present in the lives of the families that took part in this research and is one of the ways in which the self as self is brought into being; secondly, that social class identity is a process rather than a fixed position; thirdly, that this process is relational: that is that working-class and middle-class identities are produced in terms of their position in relation to each other; fourthly, that the boundaries of class are fuzzy and constantly changing because class formation is produced through conflict; and fifthly, that this conflict takes place at the symbolic as well as the material level[1].

In this chapter, I engage more closely with contemporary debates about social class, with particular reference to the work of feminist post-structuralist sociologists, who have contributed much to my thinking about how class analysis can be taken beyond structural explanations. Many of these academic women are from working-class backgrounds. Some of this work has an autobiographical dimension: all of it challenges the writing about class as a writing about others by academics who can gaze at that class from an 'objective', 'scientific' distance[2] (Steedman 1986; Walkerdine and Lucey 1989; Walkerdine 1991; Kuhn 1995; Hey 1997a and b; Mahony and Zmroczek 1997; Reay 1998a; Skeggs 1996, 1997a and b, 2004; Lawler 2000). This has been an important development because, like some American writers before them (Rubin 1992; Sennett and Cobb 1993), they write about what it is like to live the specificities of classed location at a particular time and in a particular place.

The chapter is divided into two sections. Part One begins with an historical contextualisation of my analysis with reference to shifts in understandings of citizenship and to a particular piece of housing legislation that impacted on the personal lives of the families who took part in *Project 4:21*. I then lay the sociological ground by looking at the classical approaches to social class analyses of Marx and Weber. Debates in the empirical investigation of social class and the positioning of women within these schemes as well as the relevance of classification schemes for my analysis are discussed. This leads on to an examination of how an emphasis on consumption has impacted on

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[1] Skeggs (2004: 5).
[2] See Chapter Two for a critique of objectivity.

ideas about social stratification. I then focus on the problem of locating a 'real' working-class, and argue for the need to move beyond understandings of class that rely on structure, materiality and consciousness, to consider the place of emotions, fantasy/phantasy and the unconscious. In Part Two of the chapter I move to an examination of data from *Project 4:21* to provide an analysis of the micro-dynamics of classed and racialised subjectivities as they are constructed and regulated in the interrelated fields of housing, geographical location and cultural codes of taste and style.

PART ONE: SOCIOLOGICAL DISCUSSIONS OF SOCIAL CLASS

The 'sale of the century'

Some feel that the 'zeitgeist' of the 1980s was the ideology of enterprise as created by the Conservatives, with enterprise presented as the solution to modernisation and to the otherwise intractable crisis of capitalism. Services that, post-war, had been owned and provided by the state were sold off to private companies, including travel, rail, power and water services. Other public services were retained by the state as semi-independent agencies to be run along market lines (as with health, education and social services). These moves were embedded in changes in how citizens were conceptualised. In the late 1980s, there was a decisive shift from the idea of citizens as passive recipients of welfare towards a far more active and individualistic notion of citizenship that emphasised competitive self-interest, individual rights and personal responsibilities and obligations enshrined in the contractual relations of 'charters'.

In line with these ideas, the government introduced legislation in 1979 that allowed council tenants to buy their accommodation, in an Act appositely named the Right to Buy Act. This was to become a pivotal policy moment in British cultural and political life, and one that provoked much debate in discourses of social class from the political Left in the UK at the time. The idea that the working-class was already fragmented and disillusioned was already in place (Krieger 1986). Now, there were fears that this massive expansion of

property ownership amongst the already fragmented working-class (Goldthorpe and Lockwood 1968; Gorz 1982) would mean that working-class people would lose the very characteristics that made them working-class. Would they reject the welfare state and move even further away from their attachment to collective social modes of organisation to become a mass of self-seeking individuals (Hattersley 1995)?

Much of the discussion in this chapter coheres around the interconnected themes of location, housing and home ownership, all of which emerged as a central trope in the narratives of the young women and their parents at Phase Four of *Project 4:21*. Through a case study analysis of two working-class families, the Cole and the Green families, I demonstrate the importance of the Right to Buy Act, specifically, and the ways in which location and place, more generally, have a central role to play in understanding class in the present.

Sociology and social class

Since its beginnings the discipline of sociology has been concerned to research and analyse the unequal distribution of wealth, privilege and power in societies. Different variants of class analysis provided, until the1980s, the main conceptual frameworks through which inequalities were understood, even though there was no consensus over exactly what class was or how it might be conceptualised. Until recently, the two theoretical perspectives that dominated class analysis were neo-Marxism and neo-Weberianism.

While Marx recognised that there were divisions within the working-class, he envisioned that the common experience of exploitation, conceptualised as lying at the heart of the capitalist class structure, would remove these divisions. In Weber's model, rather than the deepening antagonism which Marx asserted would inevitably occur between the two main classes - the bourgeoisie and the proletariat - Weber posited a plurality of class groupings and the existence of diverse forms of conflict between all these social groups. Broadly speaking, in the intellectual and political climate of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, with its emphasis on diversity and differentiation, most traditional

class analysis (with some neo-Marxist exceptions, for instance, Abercrombie and Urry 1983, and Scott 1991) has been conducted within a neo-Weberian framework.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, fundamental challenges to the supremacy of class theory were mounted, three of which can be clearly identified (Bradley 1996; Roberts 2001). Firstly, it has been argued that old frameworks for thinking about class are no longer appropriate given the rapid and radical changes to the economic and social conditions that previously shaped the class structure. Hout et al (1996) argue that those who think that the concept of class is no longer relevant or useful are coming from a romanticised view of a previous class structure which was stable and unitary (that everyone knew what it was and where they were in it).

Secondly, theorists of racial difference and dynamics have maintained that traditional class theory cannot simply be adapted to incorporate differences of gender, 'race' and ethnicity (Gilroy 1987). Lawler points out that one trend in this debate is to suggest that class identities have been replaced by new identities based on the categories of 'race', ethnicity, gender, nationality, religion (2000). Furthermore, traditional approaches to the study of 'race' and 'ethnicity' have tended to focus on conflict between 'white' and black' groups but often in a way that has sidelined or even ignored class and gender positioning (Cashmore and Troyna 1983; Miles 1989). Reynolds points out that in discussions of class and race, not only is there an assumption that all black people are working-class, but also that black people are represented as though they have no interest in social class identity, 'as if race provides the defining characteristic in shaping their subjectivity' (2000: 82).

The 'new sociology of ethnicities', which is heavily influenced by postmodern accounts and focuses on identities, cultural practices and racist discourses, has been able to incorporate class as one of the social processes through which racial and ethnic difference is produced and reproduced (Gilroy 1987, 1993; Donald and Rattansi 1992; Tizard and Phoenix 2002). The concept of fragmentation has been used in other areas of stratification theory, in relation to

both gender and race and with it a concern to explore the ways in which different aspects of inequality interrelate (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992). The notion of 'hybridity', developed by Homi Bhabha (1990), adds another dimension to theories of fragmentation and helps us to explore the dynamic formation of contemporary ethnic identities in a post-colonial world (as discussed in Chapter Five).

The third and perhaps most serious challenge to 'grand narratives' particularly Marxism, has come from the intellectual movement known as postmodernism. Such 'meta' theories are viewed as unable to theorise the diversity and plurality of social experience (Mercer 1990; Bradley 1996). Neo-Weberian models that already contained the notion of 'fragmentation', have fared better in the deconstructive onslaught of postmodern and post-structuralist enquiry, although some have taken the idea of fragmentation further, arguing that classes have been subject not merely to change but also to disintegration (Beck 1992). Individualisation theorists such as Giddens (1991) describe the liberating possibilities of a post-traditional society in which being freed from the constraints of traditional social ties means that men and women must reflexively create new, potentially more fulfilling relationships based on mutual satisfaction rather than contractual obligation. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim suggest that the erosion of the old certainties of industrial society has presented both new risks and opportunities (2002). In these analyses, recognising themselves as individuals is the key to people becoming the autonomous subjects through which progressive social change can be accomplished. The subject of this account is a rational one, who can come to know herself through a self-conscious reflexivity upon which she can then straightforwardly act. Additionally, although optimism is measured by recognition of the difficulties of change (particularly in Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's account), the theorists do not dwell on the difficulties inherent in the act of transformation; there are no deep losses to be faced at the end of tradition.

For policy makers on the left and right, the concept of 'social capital', as put forward most influentially by two America social theorists, Coleman (1988) and Putnam (2000), has offered a much more attractive way of understanding social

inequalities and of providing the framework for the solution to them, than social class. (It is important to note that this is very different to Bourdieu's theory of social capital, which is discussed later in this chapter). Broadly speaking, this version of social capital refers to 'the values that people hold and the resources they can access, which both result in, and are the result of, collective and socially negotiated ties and relationships' (Edwards et al 2003: 2). It became a concept that underpinned much New Labour government policy-making and provoked an equal amount of debate amongst sociologists in late 1990s Britain[3]. It has been heavily criticised on a range of bases. Morrow argues that it is gender blind, ethnocentric, ahistorical and based on outmoded, romantic and idealised versions of the family and of communities (1999). Campbell states that it is a nebulous concept 'that can include anything from how parents interact with their children to how people feel about where they live, to whom they know, how much they use their 'networks' and how much they trust their politicians' (2001: 749). Most importantly, the concept of social capital erases structural inequalities and replaces the notion of class with the notion of exclusion – but this is an exclusion that can be rectified through the acquisition of appropriate attitudes, networks and skills.

From once being viewed as one of the key conceptual tools through which to analyse social inequalities and *the* most significant mechanism of inclusion and exclusion, the very notion of social class has been variously attacked, dismissed or sidelined. At the same time, ongoing work on the development of stratification schemes for the purposes of social policy (rather than as a contribution to debates in theoretical class analysis) have continued apace (Crompton 1993; Rose and O'Reilly 1997). Below, I consider some of those schemes and their relevance for my analysis.

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[3] I do not engage with the details of this debate in this thesis, but see for instance, Thompson (2002), Baron et al (2000), Gamarnikow and Green (1999), for discussions on various aspects of social capital.

Measuring Class

Social classes have been generally conceived of as objective entities which could be empirically investigated. To this end the occupational structure has enduringly been seen as providing a framework within which the 'class structure' could be mapped (Rose and O'Reilly op cit). These schemes, particularly when used for survey purposes, have been accused of 'emasculating' the concept of social class, of producing 'bloodless' knowledge which reduces the lived experience of class to an abstraction for the purpose of statistical treatment (Connell 1977: 33). Moreover, as feminists have pointed out, and as I discuss in more detail below, such schema privilege the labour market as the place in which people come to understand themselves as classed subjects, as well as assuming that a woman's (and child's) class position is dependent upon that of the men in her household.

Although I critique classification schemes, I am not advocating an abandonment of their use. After all, the widely used Registrar General's Classification Scheme was employed in the sampling procedures for *Project 4:21* (see Chapter Two) and it was on the basis of that scheme that class location was allocated to the research participants. I have therefore made use of these designations because classification schemes, despite their inadequacies, are a useful way to map the physical and material inequalities of class, and as Skeggs argues, at least allow us to retain the importance of structure (2004).

However, in considering such schemes, four important issues which are pertinent to my analysis are brought up. Classification schemes operate as though they can straightforwardly locate and describe actual groups of people with clear boundaries and delineations between the groups. But as Skeggs points out, the boundaries of class are undefined and 'fuzzy' because they are produced and continually transformed through constant material and symbolic struggles. It is important therefore for analyses of class to 'aim to capture the ambiguity produced through struggle and fuzzy boundaries, rather than to fix it in place in order to measure and know it' (2004: 5). The notion that there's a

coherent, unitary and unified working-class is itself a fiction, but one that is constantly produced and reproduced, and it is a fiction with real effects. This is a central theme in my analysis of data from *Project 4:21* in the second half of this chapter.

Sociology's constant striving to come up with a class scheme that can locate all individuals (whether structurally or subjectively as in Goldthorpe's scheme, 1980) speaks of the overriding desire to produce a kind of 'uncontaminated' measure of social class. This relates to my second point; that the quest for a measure that is free from corruption is theoretically and practically bound up with a focus on a specific version of 'class action'. Even in debates relating to class and consumption, the theoretical drive of the possibility of resistance amongst the workers persists and pervades (Lash and Urry 1994; Thompson and Ackroyd 1995).

Thirdly, I take the view that social class is an identity and relational *process* rather than a fixed position. In Chapter Three I explored how working-class and middle-class subjectivities were made, as well as allocated, in the domestic setting of intimate relations between mothers and daughters (see also Walkerdine and Lucey 1989). This is a relational process, not simply an economic relation to the means of production, taking place both within and between all classes, an argument that has been developed throughout this thesis. Using a Foucauldian perspective on history, I have previously argued that under certain economic conditions of capitalism, class was formed as a major tool of social regulation: 'classification' was the means by which governments, certainly from the nineteenth century onwards, made sense of their difficult-to-govern urban populations (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989). In Chapter Three I argued that the category 'working-class' is a category produced and reproduced in terms of its position as 'other; to a middle-class 'self'; it is marked as pathological to a middle-class 'normality'. This theme is also articulated through my analysis of working-class and middle-class educational success and failure in Chapters Four, Five and Six.

This brings me to my fourth point, which refers to the emotional and psychological dimensions of social class. Throughout traditional sociological discussions of social class there has been an assumption that the links between structure, consciousness and action must be the basis on which both empirical and theoretical work should proceed (Goldthorpe and Marshall 1992). Such debates have frequently assumed that what is interesting about working-class people is the production of a change in consciousness that will somehow activate their potential as a protorevolutionary group. Within a Marxist analysis it is implicit that the working-class must make a psychic transformation in order to become a class in and for itself. But somehow, these complex psychic processes which are seen as essential to the birth and development of such a class, are, at the same time ignored, or engaged with on only the most superficial level[4]. Indeed, those aspects of Freudo-Marxism and the Frankfurt school that do engage with such phenomena, along with Lacanian-inspired Althusserian work, tend to concentrate on the infantile qualities of working-class subjectivity (Althusser 1969).

In other psychological discourses the working-classes are viewed as psychologically simplistic (Argyle 1996; Blackman 1996) and barely capable of transformation. In Marxist theory, only one psychic transformation is possible and acceptable for the working-classes, one that allows them to put aside false ideology and false consciousness in order to get on with the work of revolution. Should they fail to make this particular transformation then the psyche can no longer exist in the equation, as if there are no other transformations which could be relevant to the structural and emotional lives of working-class people. In contrast, from within the psychosocial perspective outlined in Chapter One, I wish to pay attention, not only to the conscious aspects of emotions, but also to the ways in which *unconscious* fears, desires and phantasies of all classed groups are potently at play in configurations of social class.

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[4] That resistance has a profound impact on intrapersonal and interpersonal lives was evident in the effects of the miners strike of the 1980s, on the women and families of mining communities.

Social class and consumption

At this point, it is relevant to note how developments in the commercial (rather than academic) sphere have connected with sociological debates about identity. In recent years, commercial organisations have begun to focus on ways of locating and targeting existing and potential customers. Classification systems have been devised which claim to measure the relationship between structural factors such as location, job, income and lifestyle, of which aspects of consumption are taken to be indications[5]. These kinds of schemes, originally devised for the commercial market, have been taken up by political parties in an attempt to group and then predict the voting behaviour of sectors of the population (Worcester 1991).

It is important to note here that it is in the debates on post-modernity that the importance of consumption has been signalled, of a move away from a stress on production and its links with classes and social communities as categories of modernity. The increasing focus on consumption has become one of the factors contributing to debates on the end of class. In some quarters it was argued that employment itself is becoming less significant and that as people's identities are being increasingly expressed and manifested through their activities as consumers (Offe 1985), it is consumption rather than production which is becoming more relevant for the analysis of stratification systems. In this model, the importance of class and locality have broken down and young people in particular have looked to consumer goods as means of self-fulfilment and identity (Miles 1996; Miles et al 1998).

As Rose (1991) maintains, there is some veracity to this argument. The 1980s saw a massive shift, from that of the producer to that of the consumer, in the

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[5] 'Mosaic' is a classification scheme based on house type, with postal codes cross-referenced with information from the electoral role, census information and county court judgments to make 'lifestyle' groupings. The JICNARS scale was widely used in marketing and is based on socio-economic segmentation (Observer Life Magazine 1997).

kinds of images of economic function that were offered to the modern citizen. In a transforming and insecure economic landscape in which loss of employment became common, people were urged to shape their lives by the use of their purchasing power.

> The image of the citizen as a choosing self entails a new image of the productive subject. ... The worker is an individual in search of meaning, responsibility, a sense of personal achievement, a maximized 'quality of life', and hence of work. Thus the individual is not to be emancipated *from* work, perceived as merely a task or a means to an end, but to be fulfilled *in* work, now construed as an activity through which we produce, discover and experience our selves'. (Rose 1991: 103)

The new interest in the idea of performance of identity (for example see Butler 1997) is in line with the notion that identities are fluid, not fixed or class-related and that they are being produced within an arena of consumption. Hence younger people are understood as being subject to more mobile categories of identity than their parents' generation, in spite of the constraints of class, gender or race. However, I would argue that such work evades the issue of the regulation of identities or subjectivities, which severely limits the apparent freedom for everyone to become anybody they want to be. Reay goes further when she argues that there is an intrinsic deceit in such postmodern accounts, which, though concerned to map changes in media, style and consumerism in general, show a stubborn unwillingness to empirically address the uncomfortable issue of who can and cannot afford to consume (Reay 1998b). After all, what consumption practices are entered into and maintained is closely linked to an individual's class location in the first place.

Market discourses that assert universal freedom of choice are used in defence of discourses of classlessness and serve to obscure the ways in which social advantage is maintained through the free-market (Reay 1998b: 261). Far from displacing the logic of class, as some would argue (Pakulski and Waters 1996), the markets themselves shape and are shaped by social relations of class. The citizens of governmental charters do not participate collectively as informed citizens in a democratic process that decides which goods and services should be provided. Ainley (1993) argues that they merely choose as 'passive consumers' between the different commodities the market offers them. If you

cannot afford any of the market options then you must fall back on what the run-down, over-stretched welfare system can offer.

Rosemary Crompton in her review of debates relating to consumption and class analysis shows that despite the very real changes in the structures and patterns of paid work, class schemes deriving from the job structure still provide a useful indicator of life chances and opportunities, and that these class schemes have not yet been superseded by consumption-based indicators (1996:125). Social class, alongside gender and 'race', remains one of the most powerful factors in the shaping of our lives and dealing out our 'life chances': how we are born, what illnesses we have and our chances of overcoming them, where we live and of course, what has been the backbone of stratification schemes since the 1950s onwards, the work we do (Halsey et al 1980; Marshall et al 1988; Eder 1993; Child Poverty Action Group 1997).

And yet consumption, by the working-classes, in particular of house-property, was partly what provoked arguments about the demise of class in the 1980s. If working-class people could own their own houses, just like the professional middle-classes, did that mean that they were no longer working-class?

Women and class

Conventional classifications of social class were, for a long time, content to dismiss or ignore the notion that women may occupy a social class position of their own, in their own right, and on terms different to that of the men in their personal lives. The predominant view was that women's class position was mediated through their relationship with men (Goldthorpe 1983), 'while men's social class is deemed to be independent, unaffected by the women they live with' (Reay 1998a:15). In recent years however, feminist critics have powerfully challenged this privileging of the labour market as the main site in which individuals come to understand themselves as classed subjects (Hey 1997b).

A growing number of writers have sought to 'broaden the base' of class theorisation beyond a labour-market focus by extending it into the domestic

sphere (Reay 1998a and b). Analysis from Phase One of *Project 4:21* made a significant contribution to this field by focusing on the relationships between mothers, children and schools (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989). A central theme of this perspective is that class must be understood as a *process* and not only as a position: for instance the work of mothering is deeply class specific and has a major role in helping to produce children as classed subjects. It is the organisation and regulation of mothering through childrearing and housework that results in key class differences.

Lawler (2000) points out that the argument that the categories of 'race', ethnicity, gender, nationality and religion have superseded class identities suggests that the identity 'woman' can take the place of identity as working-class or middle-class. Whereas what we know from feminist debates on identity is that these categories of subjectivity and identity are always 'cross-cutting, multilayered and multivalent. Gender is, and always has been, classed, as it has always been raced, sexualised, nationalised. Conversely, class is and always has been gendered, raced, sexualized and nationalized' (Lawler 2000: 27), an insight that is missing from 'malestream' discussions of class.

So how is classed femininity and masculinity produced and regulated at this time? Not only has the manufacturing base declined, but also the trade union practices through which classed masculinity was articulated for many years have been eroded by anti-union legislation. The shifts and changes in practices of production and consumption, poverty and wealth, boom and bust, should lead us to expect some uncertainty about class membership. Indeed, politicians, like Margaret Thatcher in Britain and Ronald Reagan in the US, specifically developed strategies which promised a transformation of class. In Britain these were the right to buy council homes, the selling-off of public utilities to stock-market flotation and the encouragement of entrepreneurship at the very moment when unemployment was highest (Hutton 1995; Walkerdine et al 2001). To understand these practices and their effectivity, one has to examine not only material changes but patterns of fantasy and defence, hope and longing – in other words what people longed to be and what they guarded against being.

Reading class as only an economic category fails to engage with the complexities of self-invention and the difficult position of women (Walkerdine et al 2001). Although Beck recognised that upward mobility is implicated in the move to self-invention, he called that expectation of upward mobility through education an illusion because 'education is little more than a protection against downward mobility' (1992: 94). This is important for my argument. In Chapters Four and Six I have developed the argument that desires for outstanding educational attainment are, in part, a psychic defence of the middle-classes against downward mobility. Conversely, the dreams of the working-class young women to 'become someone' can equally be understood as illusory. How, though, is class to be ignored and self-invention to be produced if the erstwhile working-classes in Beck's account, cannot actually remake themselves as middle-class through occupational mobility? This structural contradiction lay at the heart of some of the problems which faced many of the young women in this study.

In Part Two I explore the narratives of some of the families whose lives were touched by the transformations of the 1980s. I focus on two particular working-class families, the Green and the Cole families, in order to examine the practices through which they constructed and understood their class location over the period of the study, and by applying a psychosocial analysis to the data, cast an alternative analytic light on some of the emotional and unconscious aspects of class processes in the late twentieth century.

PART TWO: LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION: CLASS IDENTITIES, AND HOUSING

In 1974/75 when the twenty-one year old girls were four years old (Group A, Phase One), fourteen out of the fifteen middle-class families were owner-occupiers (93%) - thirteen owned houses and one owned a flat. All of the middle-class families had private gardens. Of the fifteen working-class families, twelve lived in council accommodation, six of them without gardens. Only three of the working-class families were owner-occupiers at that time (20%).

In 1984, when the sixteen year old girls (Group B) were six years old (Phase Three), the two middle-class families of this group were owner-occupiers of houses with gardens, whilst the six working-class families were all tenants in local authority or housing association housing: two in flats and four in houses.

However, by 1993, at Phase Four of the study, there had been a massive shift in home-ownership amongst the working-class sample. Amongst the working-class Group A families, home ownership had increased from 20% to 71% with most having bought their council properties as tenants under the Right to Buy Act. Within the Group B working-class families the movement was from zero per cent owner-occupation to 33%. At Phase Four, the middle-class families ownership of houses/flats had increased to 100%: six of these middle-class families owned second homes in the United Kingdom or abroad.

Erica Green was one of the white working-class girls from Group B who took part in *Project 4:21* when she was six years old (Phase Three). Ten years later the family had sold their council house in London and moved to north-east England where they had family connections and where Mr Green had opened his own business. In Chapter Two I described how I had put in place a fantasy of modest success for the Green family and how surprised I then was to see their large, impressive house, a stable with adjoining paddock and three cars in the drive, two of them with personalised number plates.

So what was the Greens' story, and what does it have to do with the changing face of class in Britain? In 1984, when Erica was six, Mr Green was a skilled craftsman, working in a small firm and Mrs Green worked part-time as a primary school dinner lady. They were managing financially, but were by no means wealthy. But then everything changed. As council tenants, the Greens had bought their Georgian terraced house under the Right to Buy Act of 1979. This Act gave tenants of social housing (at that time mostly owned by local councils) the right to buy their accommodation at a heavily discounted price, depending on how long they had been council tenants. This Act, as discussed above, was part of a sustained policy towards the privatisation of nationalised or state-

owned industries and resources pursued by the Conservative government then led by Margaret Thatcher.

At that time, the gentrification of specific locales within the borough that the Green family lived in (typically areas containing unmodernised properties at far lower prices than in more established or more extensively gentrified areas of London) was in full swing (Butler and Savage 1995a; May 1996). During the early 1980s Mr and Mrs Green painstakingly set about a complete interior restoration of their now ex-council house. Working on a small budget, they did most of the work themselves with Mrs Green researching period decor and design with books from the library. Mrs Green's mother also had a council house in the area (though much more modest), which she had bought, but had moved back to northern England a few years earlier. The Green's had been dreaming and planning to move out of London for some time, but just as their house was finished, two things happened: Mr Green hit a health crisis and house prices hit an unthinkable high. In 1986 they decided it was time to sell both houses and join Mrs Green's mother in the north. With the sizeable profit from the sale of the houses they were able to buy a franchise of the business where Mr Green had been floor manager for over ten years and go into business themselves.

Sharon Cole was another white working-class girl who took part in the study when she was six. Her father worked for the local council as a security guard and was a member of the Labour Party; her mother worked as a lavatory attendant and was a shop steward in her union. They lived on a large council estate (about half a mile from the Greens), which was gaining a reputation for crime: Mrs Cole had been mugged once and their flat had been burgled six times. Like the Greens they were worried about their children's future in a poor inner-city borough. As Mr Cole put it:

> In that year, yeah. I think we were a bit worried about how the children were going to be brought up because Sharon herself was only six, seven at the time, the boy Richard was only ten and we decided then that if they kept living in that environment of so much violence and it was easier to steal than to work, which happens - you can't blame the kids, it's actually true, it's the government that causes

> it, you know what I mean. And what we decided then, was that it would be better off to move.

As with the Green family, this decision to move also coincided with a crisis in Mr Cole's health, resulting in him being medically retired from his job. Unlike the Greens, the Coles had no property on which to capitalise: they had not been tempted to buy their flat on a run-down council estate. However, from savings and Mr Cole's early retirement payment, they too managed to escape London and bought an ex-council house in a suburban Thames estuary town. Mrs Cole started her own small catering business. When I visited their house to interview Mr Cole he showed me the extension he was building onto the kitchen, explaining how he was going to do this and that job and what it would look like when it was finished. Both parents stressed how 'safe' and 'quiet' the area was, how the schools were so much better. They too felt that they had made real improvements in their lives and those of their children. The move out of London and into their own house was a move up and one of which they, like the Greens, were proud.

In 1995, Roy Hattersley, a former senior member of the then opposition Labour Party argued that it was futile to mourn the end of full-blooded socialism and claim that the Labour party was abandoning working-class values when the working-class themselves abandoned them first (Hattersley 1995). Hattersley invoked the 'solidarity' and 'community' amongst miners and shipbuilders in opposition to 'the age of the almost universal middle-class - individualistic, self-confident, suburban in attitude and aspiration if not in income and lifestyle'. What did his comments have to do with the Coles, the Greens or with the other working-class families in our study, nearly all of whom had achieved some measure of social and/or economic mobility in the last 20 years? Did this necessarily mean the end of the class story for them and their children? Both the Coles' and the Greens' stories, as well as the stories of many other working-class families in this study spoke directly to the sentiments expressed in Hattersley's article. In that sense, their re-invention of themselves as 'suburban', signals precisely that 'free individual' that Rose (1991) and Henriques et al

(1998) speak of. What these authors see as inevitable, some Marxist sociologists take as a signal of 'the end of the working-class' (Gorz 1982).

Having something of your own: house ownership and working-class subjectivity

It was common for working-class parents and daughters across the sample to make direct connections between home ownership and perceived class location. As a growing body of work demonstrates, differences of gender, 'race', class and culture are becoming increasingly spatialised (Massey 1993; McDowell 1996; Reay and Lucey 2000). Geographical location fuses powerfully with type of housing tenure to produce a 'geography of exclusion' (Massey 1995) in and through which understandings of space and place provide a sorting mechanism, sifting out the type of people we are and the type we are not. Sharon Cole identified herself as middle-class because 'this isn't a council house, this is our own house and that's it really'.

For Satinder, a British Asian sixteen year old, whose family moved from the inner city to the suburbs of London, locality and size of house (rather than tenure) are just as important in the family's project of social mobility.

> Satinder: I think when we were in Hackney we were working-class (...) I don't know where the line lies.
> JM[6]: Well what changed for you to start seeing yourself as middle-class?
> Satinder: I suppose having a bigger house. Yeah, I suppose it was probably that.

What is invisible in Satinder's account of class mobility is how, not only in the UK, but across Europe, the US and Australia, the processes of residential differentiation and, crucially the imagery of 'racial segregation' have played key roles in the social reproduction of race categories and the organisation of objective and subjective space (Smith 1989, 1993; Back et al 1998). Although the area in which all of the sixteen year olds grew up was and remains a multicultural one, differentiations in terms of social class, race and ethnicity

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[6] My colleague June Melody.

remained highly visible on the spatial landscape. White professionals such as Hannah's parents were able to move into the district without loss of class location (May 1996). They were part of the process of this area's gentrification, a process which Cross and Keith suggest is itself the story of 'pioneers' who 'fearlessly enter decaying parts of the city in order to 'revitalise' them' (Cross and Keith 1993). However, while the cultural diversity of this particular urban locale is celebrated by the new 'cultural classes' (May op cit), those black and Asian residents were implicated quite differently in its designation as a 'site of social deprivation' (Social Exclusion Unit 1998). For families like Satinders' family (as well as for many of the white working-class families) moving out of the inner city and into the suburbs (Kearns and Parkes 2003) was one way of attempting to escape the stigmatising effects of the 'urban imaginary' which threatened to fix them as part of the 'underclass'. Sharon Cole pointed to the upward step that the family had taken in moving out of the inner-city:

> I'd say we're middle-class now we've moved here. And other things like, I don't know, it's a lot cleaner round here and quieter at night. My aunty still lives there and to be honest, I don't really want to go to her place to visit like, I don't want to go back there.

When speaking about definitions of social class the middle-class participants spoke far less about houses or money. Perhaps this is not surprising; they already had these things and although they may have experienced financial anxiety, the ownership of property had been, for most of them, a fact of their family histories for at least one generation. The exception to this was those middle-class parents who came from working-class families[7]. In 1993 six of the middle-class families owned second homes in the United Kingdom or abroad. To own one's home does not signify a transformation in structural and identity terms in the way it does for working-class people, nor is it viewed in the same way.

In 1979, when the Conservative government put in place legislation allowing council tenants to buy their homes at discounted prices (legislation which had in fact been originally instigated by the previous Labour administration), there was

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[7] In some ways this group need to be understood as a separate category (see Chapter Four).

an outcry from sections of the political Left, who accused the working-classes (in a similar vein to Hattersley's words cited earlier) of abandoning traditional community values in favour of a misplaced and individualistic desire for personal gain (Krieger 1986). Again, this accusation spoke of 'false consciousness' and the ease with which working-class people allowed themselves to be shamelessly manipulated by capital. But the Coles' and Greens' stories spoke of a quite different experience and motivation. Neither family were naive in their decisions, one to sell their council house and achieve the kind of upward mobility which certainly would have been impossible with the profit from it, the other to move out of their flat on a badly run-down estate to buy a cheap house outside of London. Mr Cole was an active member of the Labour Party for many years; his socialist credentials were valid, and yet he and his wife chose to become home-owners. Mr Cole succinctly placed his own decision to become an owner occupier within a broader political context as well as pointing to some of the emotional dimensions of home ownership:

> What she [Thatcher] actually done was give the so-called poor the chance to own - and everybody wants to own their own house, I don't care who you are. The people who says "Oh I'd rather be in rented accommodation" are talking porky pies. They want their own bricks and mortar. And what it boils down to, she give it to them. And then she put the screw on and said "Now you've got your mortgage you can't afford to do nothing. You can't afford to strike, you can't afford not to work." And that was it, so she had you.

A number of commentaries stressed the negative impact that the 1979 Housing Act had on an already fragmented working-class (Henderson and Karn 1987). Despite large discounts, not all council tenants could afford to buy their accommodation, even if they wanted to. Crucially, not all council accommodation constituted a desirable investment in the first place and so this option was not an equal one to all council tenants. The Green's Georgian house in a street that was being gentrified, represented quite a different investment prospect than the Cole's flat on an estate with a reputation for crime. For tenants living in high-rise blocks, the chances of being able to move up the property ladder by 'selling on' were slim (Weir 1982). Selling off the best housing stock under this policy, with chronic under-investment in existing stock, alongside plans to put much of the rest in the hands of housing associations,

was viewed by some as a strategy of the state to divest itself of the responsibility of providing and maintaining social housing (Forrest and Murie 1988). Mr Cole's comment invoked one of the arguments of the time, that this policy would only serve to increase inequalities between an already splintered working class and create polarisation between those who could afford to buy into the Tory acclaimed stake-holder democracy through property-ownership and those who had to continue to rely on dwindling welfare state commitment and resources in housing (Hamnett 1984).

All of this is valid, but these debates shed little light on why so many working-class council tenants took the owner-occupation option. Krieger emphasises the crucial role that housing and the 'sale of the century', right-to-buy policies played in local and national elections, arguing that the working-classes were 'disillusioned' and 'worn out by the failures of social democracy' (1986: 84). Of course there were economic reasons why people bought their council homes. Rent, even if it is paid for a lifetime, does not accrue interest. It is not an investment in the same way that a mortgage on bricks and mortar is seen to be. Viewed like this, rent seems like a waste of money, with nothing to show at the end of the tenancy.

I have also tried to demonstrate in this chapter that there were important emotional dimensions to the massive take-up of the 'right to buy'. For the Greens, this was the only way they would ever get of achieving the kind of social mobility or social respectability they desired. For others, it was an opportunity to escape the 'inner city' and move to a 'better' area. For many working-class people, owning your own house meant freedom from the petty interventions of local government: freedom to paint the front door any colour, make home improvements, individualise the home. It also represented freedom from the more serious possible consequences of council tenancy; of lack of security, even for those who had lived in a property for many years. Of course, security and safety are deeply implicated in meanings of 'home' (Gurney 1999).

Sharon	I think you'd feel more safer if you was like middle class and you had your own property and lower class is like in a bed and breakfast or a flat.
JM	Why do you think that would make you feel more secure?

Sharon I don't know, because if it's your own house, no one can take it away from you really. And in a flat, if you don't keep up the payments, or something like that, they could always evict you couldn't they?

I do not dispute that there are tensions in what Sharon said. The consequences of spiralling mortgage interest rates in the late 1980s demonstrated that owner occupation can provide *less* protection than social renting from the threat of losing the home because of the risk of repossession (Hamnett 1999; Hiscock et al 2001). Nevertheless, the chance of having something, not only a home of one's own that could not be taken away by a landlord, but something that could be passed on, a gift through inheritance, to one's children – something that the propertied middle-classes took for granted (Hamnett et al 1999) – was deeply, emotionally significant to many working-class people.

In the 1990s a New Labour emphasis on social exclusion brought geographical location starkly to the fore. In particular, large local authority estates such as the Cole family moved away from became the focus of intensely stigmatising discourses in the media (Toynbee 1998; Phillips 1998; Hugill 1998) as well as the object of interventionist strategies of regulation (Cohen et al 1996; Social Exclusion Unit 1998). If, as Thrift and others assert it is the case that 'Places form a reservoir of meanings which people can draw upon to tell stories about and thereby define themselves' (Thrift 1997: 160), no wonder so many working-class families grabbed with both hands the chance to move out of those places that were discursively constructed through notions of deviance, deficit and failure in an attempt to tell a different story about themselves (Reay and Lucey 2000). In this sense then, location and place have a central role to play in understanding class in the present. In particular, as work from the tradition of cultural geography demonstrates, class is something that is located spatially. It is in the neighbourhood, the house, and as I explore in the next section, it is marked on the body.

Class codings of taste and style

Bradley points to the deep contradictions that exist in the sociological literature on social class. In particular, the tensions between the concept of postmodern. multiple identities and modern class identities is played off against ever-present class inequalities in Britain; in salaries, health, teenage pregnancy, educational achievement, housing and crime (1996: 45). Those inequalities were starkly played out for the young women and their families in *Project 4:21* and yet they were still having to remake themselves as new subjects, subjects beyond class, as though class did not matter. Bradley suggests that 'class is everywhere and it is nowhere' – with no definite physical signs or markers, it is hard to observe (op cit: 45). But I have argued (following Bourdieu 1984) that everyone, whatever their class position, detects the minutiae of class difference signs and uses the information that the signs deliver in the making of difference every day of their lives. The micro as well as the macro processes of social class take place regardless of the fluidity of boundaries or transformations in economics.

While neo-Marxist and neo-Weberian theorists continue to engage with the categories and quantifiers of social class, the work of Pierre Bourdieu has contributed towards a shift of focus in contemporary theorising of class to include a complex analysis of the interrelationship between class and culture (Bourdieu 1984). Within this model the distribution of different kinds of 'capital' (economic, cultural, social and symbolic) locate (and have the potential to move) the owner through social space. The markers of the possession of these different kinds of capital are both abstract and material, encompassing taste, education, lifestyle, accent and cuisine (see Skeggs 1997a). Importantly for my analysis, Bourdieu defines social class not only in relation to the arena of production, but also to the more general, though more complex, conceptual space of social relations.

As noted above, the middle-class sample did not mention home ownership and far fewer spoke about money as a defining factor in class location. Instead they prioritised education as central in determining class position, and this in turn was much more likely to surface in comments which brought up and utilised the

notion of 'privilege' and 'opportunity'. Importantly, this was also true of the working-class girls who were heading for or were already at university. Other studies (Holland 1993;Tizard and Phoenix 1996; Frazer 1988) found that middle-class youngsters have more of a grasp of the complexity of social stratification. It certainly seemed to be the case in *Project 4:21* that the middle-class girls and parents were able to identify and express more clearly than their working-class counterparts what Bourdieu would term 'cultural capital' in relation to class position (Bourdieu 1984). Hannah, a white middle-class sixteen year old says:

> I suppose I think of it as being a kind of ethos (...) It's about something much bigger than the profession of your parents yeah. And it's also about taste and about dress and about interests. You can spot it a mile off even though it's not to do with money.

Bourdieu's theorisation of social class highlights the sensitivity of our cultural antennae to the qualitative, subjective, micro-distinctions through which social class location is expressed and understood. By displacing linear representations of class in favour of a theory of social space in which power is distributed in the form of different types of capital, the borders and boundaries of social class are opened up, made more fluid. Hannah's own social location can be understood within this framework. Her parents, both from professional middle-class families, had opted for communal living as a young couple in the 1970s. Their shared house was a walk away from the Greens', in the same run-down part of London, and Hannah went to the same primary school as Erica, Sharon, Satinder, Zoe, Rebecca and Eleanor. Although her parents were graduates, the family were not financially well-off as Hannah was growing up; they had made political and lifestyle decisions which eschewed more traditional routes into professional occupations. Although not wealthy in material terms, however, they possessed considerable cultural and social capital of the kind that accrues advantage in contemporary society. Hannah grew up in an area deemed economically and socially deprived, she went to the local, predominantly working-class primary school. But the distinctions between her class position and that of girls like Erica and Sharon were at the same time both subtle and hugely significant. At six years old Hannah was the only child in her class who did not have a television at home. While other girls played at 'talent

shows' where they performed pop chart songs to each other (in which Hannah could not join in because she did not know the cultural references), Hannah learned to play the violin and battled with the discipline of a daily practice regime. At eleven years old, this musical training facilitated her entry to an extremely popular state school on the other side of London; one whose academic results were far better than the local under-performing comprehensive that Rebecca and Christine, went to[8].

Bourdieu understands the knowledge of taste and style as a possession, as a kind of capital. While his analysis can pick up the articulacy of Hannah's remark about being able to 'spot' class 'a mile off', it misses something more subtle and painful. In Bourdieu's framework class is in everything about the person, from the location of their home, to their dress, their body, their accent. In Chapters One and Two I discussed how the psychoanalytic concepts of projection and projective identification help to illuminate processes of individual and group identity formation. These defensive psychic processes are ways in which we differentiate between 'me' and 'not me' and are the means through which we may dispel good and bad parts of the self onto those categorised as 'not me', as Other to 'me'. Otherness is in the myriad large and small signs through which people recognise themselves and categorise both themselves and those from whom they seek difference, distance and distinction.

Indeed, that recognition and the fragile move from pejorative to acceptable classification and judgement is exactly what Sharon Cole described when she called herself middle-class because she had moved away from what was viewed as a dangerous council estate. It is what Erica Green talked about when she described the highs and lows of her move to the north of England. Underneath the bright veneer of the success story of upward mobility conveyed by the house and the lifestyle, lurks the possibility that some signs of middle-class status (the house, the horse and so forth) were contradicted by others: the mooning gnomes in their garden, their personalised number plates and their

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[8] All of the other families in Group B, had moved out of the borough.

choice of furniture might well be seen as 'vulgar' by the middle-class families of this study.

Erica used the word 'snob' seven times in her interviews to describe herself and wished to see herself as 'above' her working-class contemporaries and neighbours.

> Well like, if I don't like anybody and, like somebody up the road (laughs) who I won't mention, because they live in a council house and I've got all this, you know I tend to look down on them and say "I've got more than you have" (...) I can be very snobby at times.

I would suggest, following Klein and the object relations theorists, that this was a defensive posture, developed in order to shield herself from her fear that, in fact, she was the one who was looked down upon. This anxiety was articulated in relation to her experiences at school: for Erica, who struggled at school, 'intelligence' was a signifier of shameful difference:

> When I first came up I could hardly spell or read or anything and I was put in with special classes and everything (...) It was good fun when you were in the class but when all these intelligent lot that were all looking down on you as if you're not worthy to be in our class...

At sixteen Erica said she was not encouraged by her teachers to study for A levels and then go on to higher education, like all the 'intelligent lot' in her year, but to apply for a basic training course in care, in preparation for work in one of the 'caring' services - with the elderly or with children. This was not a route that she was prepared to follow, and was feeling at a loss as to what to do after her GCSEs[9], when her parents suggested she come into the business. Erica seemed very pleased about this and was full of fantasies about being a 'business-woman', wearing smart clothes, earning lots of money and driving an expensive car. Indeed, at seventeen, she was earning more money than any of her old schoolmates. She had every chance, through her parents' business to become economically well-off. But the path she was on at the time of the interviews meant that she would not follow the kind of route deemed essential to educate and groom the middle-class girls on their path to 'well-rounded', seemingly confident, well-travelled maturity. Neither she nor her parents were a

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[9] Erica attained six GCSE grade E and one grade D passes.

part of the 'chattering' classes or 'dinner-party society' and their working-class origins betrayed them at many turns. Perhaps this sheds light on Erica's reply to the question 'what would success mean to you?'

> Erica Respected, I think that's my main ambition in life to be respected in Hampwick.
> Helen In Hampwick, locally?
> Erica In Hampwick, to be known in the street as Miss Green, I'm quite respected now, you know a lot of people that they know me rather than just say "oh it's Erica", so I'm quite proud in that respect.

This extraordinary ambition for a seventeen year old speaks volumes of the way in which she clearly recognised the signs of class location. They were not capital that she either possessed or failed to possess, but rather complex psychosocial signifiers, that were lived, materially, relationally, emotionally, consciously and unconsciously.

Mr and Mrs Green's insistence that 'things were different in the north', that people took you for what you were and did not judge you on what you owned, or your job - they were 'as happy socialising with lords and ladies as with the bus driver' - could be taken as a sign of a complex defence against the fear that they in fact were not really fitting in. Indeed, I would argue that this reading is supported by Erica's feelings about class and her identification as middle-class. Erica said that she could be a 'bit of a snob' at times and mentioned disliking and 'looking down on' some people who lived in council houses. I would suggest that this comment revealed some of the conflicts of social mobility for Emma. This word holds connotations of superiority and contempt and could be understood as a way of saying very clearly 'I am different to them' and 'I am better than them'. But the ghost of her former self haunted her talk about her social identity, revealing, I would suggest, the shame and contempt she felt for that previous self. It also tells us something of how this shame must be defended against. In becoming upwardly mobile she had to attempt to erase all marks of what she used to be. She had to become more snobbish than those who had been born middle-class, who could afford to say that class did not matter to them. And more than this, she believed at some level that she did not deserve what she now had:

> I've lost a lot of friends since I started to work. Because all they're saying is you know I'm getting like a leg up in the business. And er they're getting nowhere you know.

The Registrar General's system of classification located Mr Green as skilled manual working-class in 1983, though, at the time, he and his wife defined themselves as middle-class. In 1993, despite their economic success they were far more cautious about defining themselves in this way.

> Father: Well everyone likes to say they're middle-class, but I mean I work for a living so...it's a difficult one. We don't look at class to be honest.
> Mother: working-class...
> Father: ...well we've got a bit better than that...
> Mother: ...a bit more than the average working...
> Father: ...yeah. I mean if you work for a living, you're working. I mean you're working-class. But obviously there's different levels of working-class people.
> Mother: Not middle-class.
> Father: I've known people to say they're middle-class and they've got nowt. So where do you draw the line. I don't know.

An argument that runs through and is developed through my thesis is that success of almost any kind for working-class people, is a highly contradictory affair. For some working-class people, aspirations, wanting more and wanting to show it off can mean being implicated in a process of treachery (Reay 1996). The extract above reveals something of the kind of manoeuvring that is often involved in discussions of class and tells us something important about the emotional consequences of social mobility for some working-class people. Mrs Green wanted to assert her working-class identity while Mr Green also wanted their success to be recognised in economic and in cultural class terms. The idea that they had achieved economic success and security as well as familial happiness was one that all of the family members wanted to present and promote to the outside world. And yet, those same achievements courted danger, in the form of other working-class peoples' envy. This envy, together with the conflation of class with accent (Hey 1997b) threatened to dislodge part of the foundations on which the family had constructed their sense of 'belonging' to the area, which was heavily dependent on the fact that Mrs Green was born and brought up there – and therefore a 'local'. If they were not careful they could be accused by the kinds of working-class people that they

themselves used to be, as 'above themselves' or 'posh Southerners'[10] - either designation signals difference and exclusion.

Christine was a white working-class sixteen year old whose parents had consistently emphasised the value of education and who was heading towards university. However, her studious manner and hard work in an inner-city comprehensive school was understood as class difference by the other working-class pupils:

> Well um, 'cos they (mum and dad) always say they're working-class anyway and just, we haven't got a lot of money. We're not really, kind of, poor or anything, 'cos it seems as though working-class people are considered as poor. But I see myself as working-class but it's like, at the (school) when I first went there, I was like, well that's one of the reasons I was treated so badly, 'cos a lot of the people thought I was middle-class. And they just thought "oh, what's she doing here".... because they kind of, at the time they didn't like the idea of me being, they thought I was middle-class, and a lot of people still think I am middle-class.

While Christine described herself as not poor, her family are far from financially comfortable: her father was a semi-skilled manual worker who regularly suffered acute episodes of what was a chronic illness, they lived in a council house, did not possess a car and did not go on holidays. The standards by which she judged poverty were quite 'other' to those used by more wealthy families who went to great lengths not to become anything like as poor as Christine's family. Nor did Christine escape the contradictions of class when she went to college. She was becoming more aware that her 'image' as middle-class was founded on a public presentation of herself as 'respectable' (Walkerdine et al 2001).

Respectability and class distinctions

Skeggs' powerful analysis of 'respectability' both as a marker and a burden of class is particularly useful in relation to what the young women and their families articulate about their subjective locations (1996, 1997a and b). She argues that respectability has been a key concept in the formation of classed subjectivity, particularly of women, since the nineteenth century, and that while

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[10] Both were terms that Mr Green used in his interview.

it is most important to and explicitly articulated by those who lack it or are found wanting, it is just as central to the subjectivity of the middle-classes as they historically have defined themselves against those who did not possess it.

However, Christine's narrative reveals the fragility of a respectability that is open to compromise by the fact that she and her family lived on a council estate. She had just begun a relationship with her first boyfriend who came from a professional middle-class family. She described the first time he gave her a lift home:

> I just thought um he probably doesn't realise um where I live or - cos to me it's not a problem um but I think to other people it can. Cos he dropped me off and he was quite shocked that I lived on a council estate. And um just expected me to live somewhere else I think.

The sometimes baffling complexity (to outsiders and insiders alike) of the British class system has been intricately coded around 'taste' and 'style', with strong distinctions made by the middle-classes between 'old' and 'new' money. Amanda, a middle-class twenty-one year old who attended an exclusive, prestigious boarding school summed it up when she said:

> I suppose especially now after the '80s and stuff there are a lot of people who've made it big in business and stuff in a way that there might not have been before (...) I mean I went to school with a few people like that who like, whose parents have made it really big and they were definitely more into having like a white piano or something than, you know what I mean, 'cos and having quite a showy sort of house and things.

Amanda's comment refers to what Bourdieu has conceptualised as cultural capital and illustrates his point that as with specific forms of knowledge, it is only the cultural capital of the middle-classes that is legitimised, so the tastes, knowledges and dispositions of the middle-class are viewed as innately tasteful, knowledgeable and 'right'. Lawler notes that 'In this way, class distinctions are simultaneously at work and obscured: they are at work through the distinctions drawn between the cultural competencies attached to different social class positions, and they are obscured because they become, not a matter of inequality in legitimated forms of knowledge and aesthetics, but, precisely, knowledge and aesthetics themselves' (Lawler 2000: 29-30).

The Green family had undoubtedly made an economic transformation from the working-class. However, the working-class cultural capital of the Green family was not 'equal but different' to the cultural capital of the established middle-class families of the study. No easy or painless self-invention there. Perhaps, as I explore in the following section, it was safer for working-class subjects to be 'in the middle' and escape the difficulties that upward social mobility posed.

Being 'in the middle', being 'ordinary'

I have already spoken of the difficulty of operating as though there were a working-class that could be located unproblematically with the help of classification schemes that clearly told us where one class ended and another began. Class boundaries, as Skeggs asserts, are not fixed, they are blurred and 'fuzzy'. The following examples from the working-class families demonstrates another dimension of that border-blurring, here illustrated through the ways in which some of the working-class young women and parents struggled to position themselves as 'in the middle', if not middle-class.

There were a number of contradictory self-classifications made by the working-class group, whose members were more likely than middle-class subjects to define themselves as something other than working-class and put themselves as 'middle' class (27%)[11]. Roberts (1993) found that for many subjects, 'middle-class' was seen not as being different from working-class but as being in the middle, being ordinary, neither rich nor poor (Savage et al.

I would suggest that defining oneself as 'in the middle' speaks of a different kind of 'action' and 'transformation' for working-class people than the one that Marx wished for. Skeggs (1997) asks whether or not a subject's own identification with class categories is relevant to subjectivity given that 'dis-identification' from being seen as working-class seemed to be the motor driving the subjectivity of the working-class women who took part in her study. But as Skeggs says, 'to

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[11] Phoenix and Tizard (1996) also found this in their research with young Londoners.

dis-identify we need to know from what the dis-identifications are being made. Recognitions have to be made, resisted, challenged for (dis-)identification to occur' (1997b:123).

> Well I can at least say I'm working-class now I've got a job. I don't know what I was when I was on the dole. Under, at the bottom I suppose. I used to hate it if I had a problem with my giro or anything. I mean some of them down there talk to you like you're nothing.
> Eleanor, 16 year old, white working-class

Through these comments come the painful feelings about ascription of class belonging. For Eleanor, the 'underclass' represented her total negation as a subject - she was 'nothing', while Sharon would like her new location to count as evidence of a changed class location. In this analysis, self-invention can be understood as a tricky process, fraught with the nuances through which class location is read off the bodies, the behaviours, the speech, the dress, the housing, of the young women and their families.

The comments of the working-class girls and their families in this study were shot through with desires for a respectability which lies in the contradictory and often elusive space of 'the middle'. Importantly, this safe, middle ground relies, not only on the actual, discursive, or symbolic existence of the pathological poor, but also on its equally feared opposite, the rich. So 'they' can just as powerfully be 'posh', 'stuck-up', rich, envied for their privilege. Importantly, this is an envy which is psychically defended against and experienced as contempt[12]. Whoever 'they' are, their otherness is what must be avoided - whether the otherness of poverty or privilege.

> Middle-class, I'd say - well, working-class to my mind is someone that goes round talking like that. Middle-class, they've got a bit more respect for everything, and upper class are just idiots, because they've got no brains and they've got brilliant jobs.
> Jenny, 21 year old, white working-class

> I don't think I'd be upper class. 'Cos they've got loads of money and that, and um, some of them are right snobs and all that, so I wouldn't

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[12] As was discussed in relation to my own envy of the middle-class families in Chapter Two.

like to be like that. I'd like to have their money but not to be like some of their attitudes and that.
Jacky, 21 year old, white working-class

I'd put myself in the middle-class I think. I think there is an upper class now and between the upper class and the lower class there's a big gap isn't there? But I'd put myself in the middle-class..... Don't get me wrong, I'm a working person and I work for the family and everybody else, you know, so they've got different things indoors, but I work for them. I think - I'm no snob, don't get me wrong, but I suppose I'm middle-class yes, but I mix with everybody, so I suppose I'm somewhere in the middle. I get on with life and enjoy life to the best you can. I'm no snob, but I suppose as you say, middle-class.
Anna's father, white working-class

It is too simplistic to understand the working-class subjects who identified themselves as 'middle-class' as under a 'false' illusion. However, neither do their self-classifications speak of 'collectivism' and community. It is not the language of Marxism, traditional socialism, the trade union movement or the old-style Labour party. If we consider the practices of regulation, which depend so heavily on the use of normalisation and pathologisation, together with Conservative and other political injunctions against extremism, it is not surprising that being in the middle, not rich not poor, not Other or extreme but 'just ordinary' (Savage et al 2001), feels like a safe place to be against the terrors of other possible positions. In the age of self regulation and invention it is the only safe place to be.

Refusing class(ification)

An equal number of working-class and middle-class girls and parents at first resisted the question about their class location and expressed a frustration at the divisiveness of the concept of class. They felt that it was wrong to categorise people, put them into boxes and felt that individuals should be taken on their own merit rather than judged as being in one class or another. In these comments there was a strong desire to wish class away, even while there was, at the same time, an uncomfortable awareness of social inequality and difference.

I don't really put myself into a class (...) I think it's all stupid, this class business. I mean it's all em... material things, isn't it? It's all your... it's

whether you've got money really. Whether you've got a big car, a nice car, a big house and luxury this, luxury that. I mean, what is that? I mean, it's just stupid. (...) you shouldn't look on somebody as a class, I mean you should look at them for what they are, not class.
Zoe, 16 year old, white working-class

I don't know. I don't really think nothing about class really. I think having class is of like what class you're in is a bit stupid really. I mean a person's a person. I don't really pay much attention to like working-class, upper class, lower class.
Patsy, 21 year old, white working-class

Yeah, it's the kind of thing that you really wish that people weren't aware of, but it is still there.
Amanda, 21 year old, white middle-class

I feel I don't properly belong to any class, I also think there shouldn't be such things anyway. I think the idea of a classless society is what we should be aiming at.
Amanda's father, white middle-class

What came up powerfully in this study was the desperate desire of all working-class subjects to make their lives 'okay'. I would argue that this desire was central to their identification of themselves as in the middle. They were not mistaken in imagining that the middle-classes have 'enough' materially, and at the least more than they had. No wonder they wished, on some but not all levels, to take themselves out of a class that, in Great Britain, has always had to struggle economically. All working-class parents and many of the working-class girls spoke of a fantasised future in which they would have 'enough' both materially and emotionally. The kind of success the Green and Cole families felt they had achieved was precisely articulated around this concept of 'enough'. What also came up in relation to the working-class girls was that while many saw themselves as working-class at the moment, that was not where they wanted to be forever. Much was invested in a hopeful future in which dreams of mobility and release from paid employment featured powerfully.

I'm working-class at the moment. (But) not for ever - (untrans) you know, but I'm working-class at the moment. No I want to be rich (laugh). No um - no I don't want to be working-class for ever. Holding down a 9 to 5 job. That's not what I want to do. That's why - you know, I'm not going to do that for ever.
Sarena, 21 year old, African-Caribbean working-class

Indeed, who in the fiction of choice as a life project of self-actualisation (Rose 1999) would actually *want* to hold down a nine to five job for ever? This is not the fantasy of 'making it' that is held out as a possible dream.

For the working-class parents many of these desires were focussed on their children; they wanted a 'respectable' and therefore 'safe' location for them to grow up in and the provision of a financially secure future for them. The 1980s boom (coming as it did out of a deep recession) promised huge financial profits. Five of the working-class parents in this study did indeed try the entrepreneurial road during this decade, but only one of them achieved the kind of success which the Thatcherite dream promised. Mr and Mrs Green, with foresight, good timing and a heavy helping of luck, managed to ride the 1980s house price boom, escaping from London with a huge profit to set up their own successful business. For the others, financial loss and the slow running-down of their small businesses was the norm (Furlong and Cartmel 1997; Walkerdine et al 2001).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated that rumours of the death of class are greatly exaggerated and that social class is explicitly and implicitly alive and present in the lives of the families that took part in *Project 4:21*. Through an analysis of data I have revealed the nuanced ways in which personhood is understood through classed categories and how this intersects with gender in the construction and regulation of contemporary subjectivities. Feminist analyses of gender and class take up the insight that the inequalities of class society cannot be reduced to economic inequality; indeed, economics may not always be the most meaningful way to talk about class. Skeggs maintains that 'While class is not reducible to symbolic systems, one of the ways in which it is made 'real' is through cultural mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, of normalization and pathologization' (2004: 28). I have argued further that although it is important to keep an understanding of the impact of structural inequality in analyses of social class, there is also a need to move beyond materiality and the conscious aspects of class in order to fully appreciate and understand how social class processes are carried through and held by

emotional processes, and engage with the conscious and unconscious defences necessary to cope with the exigencies of daily life (Walkerdine et al 2001).

Part of the difficulty in trying to speak about social class is caused by an over-emphasis on the question of how and where to locate the working-class. In this chapter I have argued that class cannot be understood simply through any of the available sociological modes of explanation. The production of people from all classes and the way in which they live their subjectification centrally involves a constant invitation to consume, to invent, to choose and yet even in the midst of their choice and their consumption class is performed, written all over with their every choice: from house to dress, from accent to appearance; Eliza Dolittle is as present in the early twenty-first century as she was in the nineteenth (Walkerdine et al 2001: 53). And more than this, the living out of these marks of difference is filled with desire, with longing, anxiety, pain, defence. Class is at once profoundly social and profoundly emotional and lived in its specificity in particular cultural and geographical locations.

The next chapter examines the world of paid work as a site in which the young women of *Project 4:21* are required to re-make themselves as modern feminine subjects. Through their narratives I explore the place and meaning of paid work to the young women; how they feel about it if they have left education and entered the labour market, what they hope to do in the future, their dreams, fears and phantasies. Arguments that the labour market has become increasingly feminised suggest that it has become much easier for women to enter and rise within, occupations and professions previously closed to them. I explore whether this is the case, or whether older patterns of gender and class inequalities remain entrenched.

CHAPTER EIGHT

BEYOND EDUCATION: GENDER AND THE WORLD OF PAID WORK

> No. I don't know actually [when I'll have children]. It would be nice to have them soon because I don't want to be too old when I have them, but looking into the future, I can't see that they'd happen within the next five or six years at least, because simply with the demands of the job I mean. Because the next two years after I qualify I'll be working like 150 hours every week kind of thing. You can't have kids then.
> Atiya, 21 year old, middle-class Asian (family from Pakistan) (medical student)

Introduction

This chapter explores the significance of paid work[1] for the production of the subjectivities of the young women, their mothers and their fathers at a particular historical moment, late 1990s Britain. Competing discourses in the 1980s and 1990s around the importance (or non-importance) of paid work and the changing nature of work had major implications not only for debates about all women, but also for working-class and middle-class men.

The move into paid employment has gathered importance since the 1960s as a powerful signifier of adult status for young women, as it previously was for young men, even while the means and routes through which this could be achieved remain profoundly differentiated according to class, gender and 'race'. At sixteen and twenty-one years old, one of the biggest divisions between the girls and young women of this study was between those who were still in full-time education and those who were not involved in any kind of formal study but who were in, or available for paid employment. Whether working or not, paid work was a crucial aspect of the construction of the young women's subjectivities. There are then, a number of questions which I wish to address in this chapter. What impact did changes in the structuring of waged labour have on patterns of inequality amongst the young women? How were these inequalities experienced by them and what impact did they have on their

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[1] It is paid employment, outside or inside the home that is referred to in the terms 'work', 'employment' or 'job'.

everyday lives? How important was not only the actual work they did. but the kinds of work they wished for, to them and their families?

As traditional forms of working-class male employment has diminished, work has become more, not less important to women. Previously, women's paid work was much more intermittent, taken up when domestic duties were lightest or at moments of national emergency when women were brought into the labour force as substitutes for male workers (Bakker 1988). Until the powerful challenges of feminist writers such as Ann Oakley (1974) in the 1970s, women's domestic activity was largely hidden and certainly did not count as 'work'[2]. Their participation in waged labour was overwhelmingly viewed as marginal and the 'model worker' was a man with a dependent family (Goldthorpe 1980, 1983; Jenson et al 1988). With such a strongly held model of the 'family man', trade unions in the UK and elsewhere then bargained and demanded 'family wages' to support these dependants: their wives and children.

During the 1960s and 1970s, youth studies and educational sociology worked with models of predictability in relation to school-work transitions. Theorists of the 1980s and 1990s shifted this notion towards a transitional model which emphasises the way individuals negotiate risk and uncertainty: what Evans and Furlong refer to as a navigation model (1997). In this thesis I am moving away from a model which assumes a pre-given psychological subject (Henriques et al 1998) towards one that understands the new and changed exigencies of the constitution of subjectivity in the present. It is in this context, that the necessity for self-invention produces new discursive spaces for young women to enter as subjects, spaces which in fact might be fraught with difficulties and contradictions. In Chapter Five, I considered arguments put forward by cultural theorists that new forms of subjectivity are hybridised (Bhabha 1990; Hall 1992; Gilroy 1993), that is, that the instability of identity is characterised by people who are no longer simply working-class or black subjects for example, but are class and ethnic hybrids. This idea is particularly important for understanding

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[2] Women such as those involved in the domestic labour debate at this time (Seccombe 1974) attempted to extend class theory to explain the oppression of women.

some of the working-class girls and those girls from the middle-class who were first generation middle-class (also see Chapter Six).

In the context of changing work practices, it has also been argued that there is a hybridisation and reversal of work-place gender identities (see Adkins, 1995 for a review). Adkins argues that the gendered body has been established as mobile, fluid and indeterminate. However, this 'feminisation' of the workplace does not necessarily serve women well. Although a feminised corporeality is required of men in order to enter service work for example, the taking on of 'feminine' attributes in business is far easier for men than it is for women who enter male professional and business domains. These women are faced with the impossibility of successfully crossing over onto the side of the masculine. Adkins therefore suggests that it is easier for men to inhabit feminine corporeality and performativity than it is for women to take up male modes of corporal performativity. She cites a study by McDowell (1997) who explored women's performance on the trading floor of the stock exchange :

> While McDowell stresses that certain masculinized performances by women may potentially be disruptive of gender- for instance, performances of emphatic gestures and facial grimaces by women on trading floors are understood to challenge conventional images of feminine passivity - many of the professional women stressed difficulties in performing masculinity at work. Some, for example, were found to adopt a feminized version of the male uniform and others to perform as honorary men, but such performances are shown to be doomed to failure, counterproductive and to often backfire. Indeed for many of the women masquerading as a man was impossible. One of the respondents commented, for example, that it is difficult, even demeaning to try to be one of the boys, and another you can't go out and get ratted as one of the boys in the pub; it just won't work. Indeed these professional women stressed that such performances often had negative workplace consequences with, for instance, colleagues and clients finding these masculine performances inappropriate and out of place at work. (Adkins, 2001: 26-7)

In fact, McDowell's research brings up issues which mirror incidents which happened for the Group A girls at Phase Two of the research, when they were ten years old at school. Girls' performance in the mathematics classroom was understood by teachers as having been produced in different ways to that of boys – a view that was supported within discourses about mathematical

performance. High achieving girls were said to have achieved their attainment by 'working very hard', whilst boys were more likely to be understood as having mathematical understanding and 'flair' (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989). Other research found that girls who did indeed perform like boys in the classroom were the target of pejorative evaluations. A pushy and argumentative girl was not understood in the same way as a pushy and argumentative boy (Walkerdine 1996, 1998). The world of work that these young women are set to enter may be 'feminised' but that does not mean that it is not fraught with contradictions.

Theorists such as Giddens (1990; 1991) and Bauman (1991) argue that while waged labour once provided a focus for the development of class-based identities in industrial societies, increasing instability and flexibility in the labour market alongside increasing permeability of the divisions between work and non-work is viewed as having an intensely weakening effect on the significance of class and status. Ulrich Beck (1992) argues that new forms of paid labour have produced an employment system fraught with risk, insecurity and under-employment and have, in effect, resulted in an individualised society of employees. Although subject to forces way beyond her control, the ideal modern citizen must operate as if she were a powerfully autonomous agent, above the structures and dynamics of inequality carried through 'race', class, age, global capitalism and so on. Giddens argues that conditions of doubt penetrate all aspects of social life and self identity and the construction of a coherent biography becomes a *reflexive* project under constant reconstruction in the light of ever-changing experiences (Giddens 1991). However, this voluntaristic model holds particular assumptions about the human subject, as rationalistic, unitary and knowledgeable that weaken it. This account of reflexivity, agency and autonomy plays down the costs to the self that this project can exact. For the Foucauldian Nikolas Rose (1991), while this autonomy is at the centre of the project of becoming a contemporary subject it can never be taken for granted, for it can only be achieved through constant work on the self. Furthermore, should one fail to achieve this state of independence and self-reliance, one has only oneself to blame. This combination of individual responsibility and accountability on the one hand and vulnerability and lack of control on the other means a heightened subjective

sense of risk and insecurity. But the kinds of anxieties that these tensions are likely to create are difficult to articulate when they are constantly denied in popular accounts of girls' and women's success.

Part of my argument is that the narrative frameworks through which the working-class and middle-class young women of *Project 4:21* made sense of themselves and their lives are shaped by the kinds of discourses that were available to them about what it was to be a young women at that time and in that place. I have argued that popular accounts of femininity in the 1990s and into the twenty-first century stressed the educational success of girls and their free and unhindered access and entry into the professions (Rice 2003). I found that discourses of endless possibility circulated amongst the young women's narratives in relation to their working lives and the transition to paid employment. However, young people struggling to establish adult identities and maintain coherent biographies, may develop strategies to overcome various obstacles, but their life chances remain highly structured with social class, 'race' and gender being crucial to an understanding of experiences in a range of life contexts (Ball et al 2000). The evidence from *Project 4:21* demonstrates that class location designated on the basis of parents' occupation, but also importantly, educational credentials, was the most efficient predictor of life chances in the lives of the girls and their families (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 1995). Of course there are many inadequacies in these class schemes, not least the marginalisation of women (see Chapter Seven). However, the terms in which work was understood by most of the young women and their families was not framed in terms of class consciousness or action. Nevertheless, I would argue that paid employment is one of the arenas in which we come to place and understand ourselves (of the kind of person we are and the kind of person we can hope to be) in a complex permutation of possibility and impossibility. Meanwhile, the materiality of employment and unemployment resonates, shapes, gives texture and colour throughout our psychic and physical lives.

Changing patterns of work

Paid work still occupies most of the adult population between sixteen and sixty four years across Europe and the US - a point that sometimes gets lost in 'post-industrial' arguments (Crompton and Sanderson 1990). It is crystal clear that for all of the young women in *Project 4:21*, paid employment remained crucial in the construction of their subjectivities whether their aspirations around work were realistic or replete with fantasy. Furthermore, the material facts of their employment or aspirations regarding their working (or non-working) futures had as much to do with class as they had with 'race' and gender. What I want to do is move these debates on by exploring the ways in which different subjectivities are formed through a number of discursive interfaces which operate not only at the level of the social, but also psycho-dynamically, in an effort to understand how everyday practices in relation to school-work transitions impact upon and produce gendered, raced and classed subjectivities.

It is important to note that arguments which assert the declining significance of work in relation to class emerged just at the historical moment when employment was becoming more important than ever before for women. The recession of the 1970s and 1980s did not see a great decline in women's employment. In fact, women have accounted for much of the growth of the labour force in the last 20 years, although it is important to keep a constant eye on the fact that many of the service industry jobs created as a result of economic restructuring have been low-level 'women's jobs' (Crompton 1993; Eurostat 1998). Nevertheless, this does not appear to be a temporary situation; female participation in the labour market continues to steadily increase, signalling women's permanent attachment to the labour market rather than a reserve army status (Bakker 1988; Wilkinson et al 1997).

The argument that 'work doesn't matter any more' and versions of it are all based on the facts of changes in the occupational market since the 1970s and 1980s when employment in manufacturing fell dramatically. A sharp decline in the manufacturing base led to massive unemployment and thus a decrease in

the numbers of what until then, constituted a large percentage of white male, working-class jobs (Office for National Statistics 1999).

Only in retrospect is it clear that the period of 'full employment' from the post-war period until the 1973 oil crisis was an anomaly rather than a stable situation. Sociologists too invested their faith in the notion of unending good times for the masses although it seems disingenuous now that social scientists were so concerned with the 'affluent worker', as if he (sic) would be affluent once and for all (Goldthorpe and Lockwood 1968). When overall unemployment began to rise (remembering that regional unemployment persisted from 2-3 per cent in the North and Scotland and was never less than 7 per cent in Northern Ireland) to over 1 million in 1975, there was a reluctance to admit to the permanence of such high levels (Hopkins 1991). Meanwhile the enormity of change was unstoppable; transformations in the industrial landscape continued to erode the very foundations of the working-class as it was traditionally understood. Thus it turned out that the long boom was unique, not the long depression.

Traditional communities, no longer sustained by the industries that had created them in the first place, began to break up or re-form, especially in the north of England and Wales. Meanwhile, the new jobs created during the economic restructuring of the 1980s were mainly in the communications and service sector. Jobs in the white-collar, service industries rose from 11.6 million in 1971 to 18.2 million in 1995 (Eurostat 1996). In 1996, the horizontal segregation of women's work could be demonstrated by the fact that over half of all women in the UK worked in only three categories of occupation: clerical and secretarial, personal and protective services including nursing, catering, cleaning and hairdressing, and sales occupations (Hakim 1996). The picture of the working patterns of the mothers and daughters who took part in *Project 4:21*, reflect the massive increase in white-collar occupations and for the working-class mothers and daughters of this study, increasing participation in those occupations at the lower rungs of status, security and pay. Of the eighteen working-class young women at Phase Four of the study, half were working in paid employment. Out of this group of nine young women, eight were employed in the kinds of work

which constituted this increase in women's jobs - clerical work, vdu operator, receptionist, care work and catering.

Popular discussions on the feminisation of the work-force abounded as increasing numbers of women entered the labour market relative to the decline of men's participation (Jenson et al 1988; Hakim 1996; EOC 1996). Some even argued that structural and social changes in occupations had 'feminised' much of the remaining employment for men (Wilkinson 1994). Two distinct camps emerged in relation to this debate - popular, celebratory representations of successful 1990s women (Wilkinson et al 1997) versus a far more cautious analysis from sociologists and economists (Jenson op cit; Callender 1996; Hakim 1996; Garcia-Ramon and Monk 1996). Some feminists accuse politicians and analysts of simply ignoring or conceiving of in too narrow a way the gender implications of such global economic restructuring and political transformation as we have witnessed particularly across Europe (Garcia-Ramon and Monk 1996).

Convergence and polarisation

While there is cause for celebration when looking at the achievements made by and for women at work, there is still much to be concerned about, particularly the differential participation of women in the labour force (EOC 1996). Women may be achieving parity of numbers in the work force but they continue to experience great inequality with men in terms of working conditions. Sylvia Walby (1997) argues that the dual processes of convergence and polarisation mark the contemporary restructuring of gender relations and women's relationships to waged labour. Convergence between men and women is occurring in employment most particularly for some *young* women who have been able to take advantage of increased access to education and therefore achieve the same or more qualifications as young men. This can have a significant knock-on effect in a labour market context in which employers increasingly demand an educated and trained work force.

At the same time, Walby and others (Bakker 1988) note that there is a growing trend towards the polarisation of women in the labour market - a polarisation which was evident in *Project 4:21*. It is my contention that convergence and polarisation between the genders can only be understood in the context of social class and that on the whole, those women who are experiencing some convergence and those who experience polarisation with men in the labour market, generally speaking, do not come from the same social class.

Diverse Transitions

For the mothers and fathers of the girls and young women in *Project 4:21*, transitions into the labour market were relatively standardised and homogeneous (though highly structured in class terms).

Changes in the youth labour market, particularly its collapse during the early 1980s, as well as the restructuring of existing employment opportunities within a framework that placed stress on training, flexibility of the work force and reduction in labour costs, served to make the transition from school to work more protracted, fragmented and unpredictable for the young women of this study than for their parents (Ashton et al 1990)[3].

This fragmentation is not as universal as discourses of individualisation might suggest however. At the first interview of Phase Four of *Project 4:21*, when the young women were sixteen and twenty-one years old[4], the overwhelming majority (87 per cent) of the middle-class girls were in full-time education and did no paid work during term time (half of this group worked during the summer holidays). Only one middle-class young woman, Gill, a New Age Traveller was not in any kind of formal education. Two of the twenty-one year olds had graduated by the time of the second interview and had begun paid work: Deborah worked full-time in her professional field as part of her qualifying year,

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[3] See publications arising from the England and Wales Youth Cohort Study (Courtenay 1988; Courtenay and McAleese 1993).
[4] See Chapter Two for a full description of the various stages of *Project 4:21*.

and Samantha did a mixture of paid and voluntary work on her local newspaper in order to get some experience before applying for a post-graduate course in journalism. Another middle-class twenty-one year old, Abigail, was on overseas placement as part of her degree course, where she also taught part-time. The pathways towards employment demonstrated a considerable amount of stability across the rest of the middle-class sample regardless of 'race' and ethnicity.

Diversity in relation to school-work transitions is very much the province of the working-class young women, who, as a group occupied many more possible locations in relation to employment and study and were far more likely to move in and out of the labour and education markets (Ball et al 2000). The middle-class sample could be said to maintain fairly traditional routes, in terms of social class, towards full-time participation in the labour market.

Risky Transitions

Of the working-class young women, 41 per cent (7) had experienced periods of involuntary unemployment. Of these, nearly half, 18 per cent (3), had experienced redundancy. At the time of the study 2 (12 per cent) working-class fathers[5] were unemployed and 35 per cent (6) had experienced unemployment and/or redundancy while only one 7 per cent (1) of the middle-class fathers had. The effect of this on their children should not be underestimated and, I would suggest, may have infused their daughters with some anxiety in relation to employment security. Whilst the growth of an insecure, temporary contract employment culture had made an impression on professional labour markets from the 1990s onwards, it was (and remains) uncredentialled, semi-skilled employees who were most exposed to and powerless in the face of the vagaries of the market and poor employment practice. It was against this contemporary backdrop that the parents in the study, in particular the working-class fathers, depicted their own early entry into the labour market during the boom years of the 1960s as an empowering experience of 'freedom to work'.

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[5] One working-class father had died some years before the last phase of the study, but previous to that his family had no contact with him. These figures are based on 17 working-class fathers and 15 middle-class fathers.

If you worked for a manager that was a right git, you told him to stick the job up his proverbial rear end. If you worked for a governor that treated you as a human being, you stayed with him. You had freedom of what you wanted to do.
Sharon Cole's father, white working-class

Well there's a big difference because when I left school I could walk into a job straight away, and if I didn't like it I could come out of that job and get another one in the afternoon. And I done that quite a few times til I was 21. I couldn't count how many jobs I had. I must have had a good 10 or 12 jobs before I was 21.
Katy's father, white working-class.

In relation to the current necessity for self-invention it is not surprising then that it was working-class fathers who talked about the ease of their own transitions to work - in a world where they did not have to transform themselves in order to fit in. It was just such men who took the brunt of new work regimes that demanded an entirely different kind of working-class masculinity - one which was groomed to meet the requirements of service and information industries - and who found that they could no longer 'fit'. Working-class women were more likely to have had to carry out this 'make-over' of the self in order to join service and clerical occupations from the 1960s onwards.

In contrast to their parents, many working-class young people from the 1990s onwards perceived the transition into the world of work as filled with risk and uncertainty (Biggart and Furlong 1996). The impact of unemployment on the young working-class women and the threat of unemployment cannot be underestimated (Mizen 1995). Jacky who was employed as a low-grade clerical officer on short, temporary contracts was acutely aware of her disposability and lack of employment protection:

> ...it's like any day they can say "oh, we'll keep you on for that week and then after that week we don't need you any more". So that's a bit of a worry as well. Then I'll be unemployed again, and I don't really want to be unemployed
> Jacky, 21 year old, white working-class

Other differences emerged around 'race' and ethnicity with higher rates of employment for white women than other ethnic groups. Studies of youth labour markets suggest that selection processes often present a layer of disadvantage

to be faced by African-Caribbean and Asian British young people, with much higher rates of unemployment than similarly qualified white British youth (Drew 1995).While there were differences between minority ethnic groups and ages within those groups, the main difference was that black, Asian and women from other minority ethnic groups tend to work part-time far less than white women in the UK (in 1991 39 per cent compared to 26 per cent respectively; Callender 1996).

Not only were the working-class young women of *Project 4:21* entering a severely depleted youth labour market, but the consequences in the 1990s, for voluntarily giving up employment were punitive to say the least. Katy's comment below highlights how changes in the laws governing unemployment benefit introduced in the 1980s, effected those who deliberately leave their jobs.

> The first time I was unemployed (laughs), I'm an old hand at being unemployed, the first time I really hated it, 'cos I'd left my previous job of my accord, I didn't get any dole money. (....) Well in a way it was like a kind of a break (laughs), sort of like a nice long break from work. But it still used to get a bit boring. You'd sort of like be at home all the time. You'd go down the job centre and that, but there would never be anything there. So I did often wonder whether I would ever get a job. Katy, 21 year old, white working-class

Katy joked about having a nice long break from work, but her light-hearted comments hid how unhappy she was in her previous job and how desperate she was to leave. Knowing however, that she would not be entitled to any benefits for six months after registering as unemployed, she had stayed in the job and saved as much money as she could so that when she did leave she would be able to get by financially until she found another job. Most importantly for her, this meant that she would not have to ask her mother, who is a dinner lady and father, who is unemployed after being made redundant, for any money. Beneath the chimera of choice, lay a great deal of insecurity.

In terms of the young women's transition towards financial independence, changes in social policy have contributed towards a lengthened period of dependency, particularly for the working-class girls (Furlong and Cartmel 1997:

Thomson et al 2003)[6]. For their parents' generation working-class youth became economically independent earlier than the middle-classes who often remained dependent on their parents until their early twenties (Roberts 1984). This remained true of the young women who took part in *Project 4:21* in that the working-class girls entered the labour market at an earlier age than the middle-class girls. However, the introduction of the 1986 Social Security Act (implemented in 1988) has meant that most young people under the age of eighteen were no longer eligible to claim welfare benefits, even if they lived away from the parental home (Donoghue 1992). Other changes in benefit legislation resulted in discrimination against those young adults who did not qualify for the full rate of benefit until they were twenty-five years old. These policy developments not only reflected the view of the Conservative governments of the 1980s and 1990s, that young people should be in full-time education or training, but also more generalised discourses that have been enshrined in educational and criminal legislation regarding parental responsibility.

Jenny's case illustrates the position that women who are married or cohabiting face when they become unemployed because they are not entitled to claim unemployment benefit.

> I'm unemployed now, I don't get any benefits because I'm living with my boyfriend. They say he's earning sufficient money to cover both of you for each week which I don't feel what he's earning is adequate because he's paying for his little boy as well, paying the rent (...) And we don't get any help with the rent or anything like that so - one step at a time. We miss out on a few luxuries and keep to the basic.
> Jenny, 21 year old, white working-class

Gill, twenty-one years old, was the only middle-class young woman to have experienced unemployment, although her decisions about how and when she earned money were closely connected with her identity as a New Age Traveller. She and her partner organised their year in relation to seasonal farming work and busking in holiday towns, and claimed income support for a large part of

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[6] See Maguire et al (2001) for a detailed discussion of the implications of this extension of 'post-adolescent' dependency and the idea that some young people are 'refusing adulthood'.

the winter. As the only middle-class girl to have left school at sixteen with few qualifications, and not returned to education by twenty-one, Gill's assertion that 'I'm never going to have a job' reflected the strength of her attachment to the travelling lifestyle, however fraught with insecurity, difficulty and discomfort it may sometimes have been. Her assertion was quite different from Katy's fear about not being able to find work.

The development of flexible employment practices has been significant in the working experiences of young people and white and black working-class women. Conservative governments of the 1980s viewed the promotion of a flexible, efficient and competitive labour market as central to non-inflationary growth. In relation to business and industry, non-interventionist and voluntarist approaches to employment policies were the order of the day (Callender 1996). Business responded by using a variety of strategies to rationalise costs, mainly through the work force. These included reducing the core work force and replacing them with part-time and temporary workers (Jenson et al 1988; Ashton et al 1990) which relieved employers of significant financial obligations such as sick and holiday pay. The introduction of new technologies, in particular micro-electronics, in the pursuit of automated production was also a crucial factor. Jenson et al (op cit) maintain that working-class black and white women start at the bottom in low paid, low-skilled jobs, many of which were a result of deskilling reorganisation of the labour processes in workplaces.

> Cos our basic wages aren't very good, but we get commission on what we sell and we get like things now and again. Cos I've been there four years and I've never had a pay rise - I had one the first year. They're going to try and get us a pay rise this year.
> Kerry, 21 year old, white working-class

Among the sample of *Project 4:21*, the overwhelming majority of working-class young women in paid employment were employed at the lower grades within their organisation. This was perhaps unsurprising, especially for the sixteen year olds, given their relative youth and inexperience. What was more worrying however was that half of this number did not expect to achieve promotion, an increase in pay, or improvement in job security by remaining in their current job.

> (Veterinary nursing) is not a very good job really, 'cos it's never much pay, and you can't really get very high with it
> Katy, 21 year old, white working-class

Most of the working-class girls had relatively few academic qualifications and were in danger of becoming stuck in a 'job ghetto' (Hakim 1996) of low-grade, low paid work. Eleanor was a sixteen year old, white, working-class girl. Her situation graphically portrays the kinds of effects, both material and emotional that entering the labour market as an uncredentialled school-leaver can produce. Eleanor worked full-time in a bakery and fast-food outlet earning £2.20 per hour with no formal employment contract and no pay for time off.

> And every Saturday at work, I work from 10 am till 6 pm, and they give me two hours break and I go back at 8pm till 2 o'clock at night...
> Eleanor

Her interview was peppered with references to work, but always in the context of how little she was able to partake in previously enjoyed aspects of her life. In relation to seeing her friends, Eleanor said, 'I haven't seen them for quite a while now, since I've been working, I haven't seen no one'. For many working-class people, paid labour remains an alienating experience which is something you do to pay for your 'real life'. Yet Eleanor's experience was producing a much darker, more despairing landscape in which, hope, one of the essential engines of life itself, seemed to have been lost:

> It's like when I have to, me having to work all those hours and everything. I think to myself "God, if I hadn't been born, then I wouldn't have to do all this", just you know (untrans).
> Eleanor, 16 year old, white ethnic working-class

The structuring of contemporary working lives such as Eleanor's clearly puts considerable strains on the self. Froggett goes further when she argues that the 'phenomenal demands of '"flexible labour" with its requirements of continuous renewal and reinvention of 'skills, social networks, self-presentation and rhythms of life' can pose threats to our ability to form 'stable core identities' (2002: 94). Eleanor's experience was a far cry from Gidden's account of postmodernity, in which subjects use reflexivity as a tool for shaping the circumstances in which they find themselves. Her comments, as well as those of Katy, Kerry and Jacky, about the exploitative practices of the organisations

they work for, all demonstrate that subjects can be both reflexive and powerless (Hoggett 2001). The tendency to put an uncritically positive gloss on the creative and constructive possibilities of reflexivity tends to obscure or even deny the negative potential of reflexivity. Sennett's study (1998) highlights clearly how corporate executives can be highly reflexive about their actions and yet those actions are just as often destructive as they are constructive. Domination then, can also be linked to reflexivity.

What impact do the 'cynically reflexive' practices of Eleanor's employers have on her psychic organisation? Her response to her work environment seemed, in Baudrillard's (1988) terms to be beyond alienation. Her despair was not mitigated by light at the end of the tunnel, for the only hope was to have been born a different person. For her the fault lay with her school, which failed to give her the help she needed. She says that if she had got this kind of help then 'I'd be doing something better with my life than working in a bloody bakery'. For Eleanor, there was no possibility of re-invention. Psychically, she could not even sum up enough hope or fantasy to imagine her way out. People who cannot imagine things being different, cannot even fantasise something else, cannot re-invent themselves.

Reskilling

New work identities emerged as the old trades, crafts and skills were lost during the running down and dismantling of Britain's manufacturing base. This decline of manufacturing industries undermined the traditional divisions between non-manual, skilled and unskilled manual of industrial labour associated with it. New technology resulted in the blurring of many traditional boundaries at work, with one person undertaking a variety of tasks where several would have been employed in the past. White-collar jobs for instance now demanded a combination of sales, clerical and administrative skills. The great divide between mental and manual labour and between secondary and tertiary industries began to crumble with the use of flexible technologies (Furlong 2003; Worth 2003).

The view that new skills are necessary for the transition to a modernised economy that relies on new technology is seen as particularly important for young people in Britain (Ball et al 2000; Hyland and Merrill 2003). But the very meaning of 'skill' itself, once central to the notion of class and, importantly, the divisions within the labouring classes, has undergone profound changes. Skill is no longer related to manual crafts, but rather to a motley collection of practical abilities (keyboard skills, computer operation skills) as well as vague 'psychological' skills and aptitudes viewed as essential requirements for a whole range of service jobs where the relationship between service providers and their clients is formed increasingly through fierce market competition.

This change in how 'skill' is understood is especially important for women as they are viewed as possessing a higher 'natural' quotient of these soft skills. Some writers would argue that this reflects the growing recognition by organisations of women's adaptability, dexterity and skills (Wilkinson 1994). These rather undefined 'social skills', which are 'transferable' and adaptable', rely more on an individualistic relationship between worker and company. For women in particular, it could be said that certain kinds of employment, particularly contemporary service work, require a particular kind of subject. A number of writers have referred to the increasing importance of emotional labour in work situations, where complex scripts governing interpersonal interactions have to be acquired (Adkins 2001). The policies and training programmes for organisations such as McDonalds inscribe the blurring of boundaries between producer and consumer, where employees are instructed to treat every customer as an individual in sixty seconds or less (Leidner 1993). Crucially however, this carrying over of the self into the workplace seems to be a one-way process whereby an emphasis on such things as 'commitment' in the worker is not necessarily reflected in either pay, status or conditions of such work. All too often these discourses serve to obscure the intensely exploitative practices that persist in capitalist relations of labour and production, hiding their deeply classed and gendered inscription:

> I would get in (to the bank) at 8 o'clock in the morning, I wouldn't leave there till about 7 o'clock at night and er and it wasn't appreciated and in the end I just started doing my normal hours. I had enough. I wanted to leave there anyway. As soon as I started doing my normal hours they

> realised the work was piling up and they still tell me - they said well you've got to get this sorted out.
> Dawn, 21 year old, African-Caribbean/white mixed race working-class

Optimists look to the opportunity for 'reskilling' the entire work force with new 'conceptual skills' needed for computer-controlled technology. This reskilling requires a new system of mass education and training which has been partly reflected since the early 1980s in the plethora of government training schemes for the mass of displaced manual workers and for those who had previously expected to enter older manufacturing industries on leaving school. Since then, such training schemes have become crucial to an understanding of school-work transitions for working-class youth (Cohen 1997). With very few jobs for young people and the systematic withdrawal of state benefits (Craig 1991), sixteen year olds have two official options: staying in full-time education or joining a training scheme. Young people have been fairly cynical about the advantages of youth training schemes and critical of both the content and context of many schemes. Jacky, a white working-class twenty-one year old was the only young woman in this study to have gone on a youth training scheme. It is interesting that despite doing well on her work experience placement and being led to believe that there might be a paid position for her at the end of the training course, the company had let her go as soon as her placement ended.

> Because of the way I was treated on one of them, I wouldn't exactly advise anyone to go on them. It's good if you want to train or something. But if you're looking for a job, then it's not.
> Jacky, 21 year old, white working-class

Even the Department for Education and Employment at that time found that youth training did not always improve the employment prospects for trainees, with only 56 per cent of ex-trainees still being in work six months after completion of training (DfEE 1995).

There is a creeping assumption in arguments made about 're-skilling the work force', as well as within educational debates, that we can all somehow do work that is 'clean' and interesting: a notion that if we open up higher education to working-class students then we can all become professionals. This is the

biggest fiction of all. Productive labour still occupies most of the population and technology has not become so sophisticated that flexible manufacture is the norm. There are still production lines, exploitative sweatshops, child labour and the regular flouting of a whole range of protective employment policies such as the minimum wage (itself set so low that it does not constitute a living wage). It is also clear that the notion of security of permanent employment is a thing of the past, with those in employment often working only part-time and on short term, insecure contracts.

> I'm looking to change jobs at the moment. What have they done? They've taken away a weeks' holiday and you've got to be off sick for a week before they give you any sick pay. There's all these cuts and whatever they're doing. And we had big rallies, whatever, a big demonstration outside the town hall. I nearly got arrested.
> Patsy, 21 year old, white working-class

Data from *Project 4:21* certainly points to new divisions arising between the securely employed, multi-skilled core of workers and the much larger periphery of insecure, semi-skilled, part-time labour, to be used and discarded into habitual unemployment as required by the latest demands of production (Hutton 1995). Nevertheless, as stated before, women's participation in the economy over the last twenty years has a stability which is absent from previous eras.

The drive towards credentialism

As I explored in Chapter Six, the response of the middle-class families of this study to mass youth unemployment has been to lay greater and greater emphasis on the acquisition of academic qualifications, in order to ensure that their sons and daughters can get scarce places in what are seen as 'secure' professional jobs. In that chapter I also explored how this emphasis on academic excellence was intimately tied up with the project of the production and reproduction of the middle-classes. However, in a climate in which the drive towards increased credentialism seems unstoppable, the idea that one can be credentialled enough, as a metaphor for being good enough gets lost, opening up an emotional space where anxiety breeds.

Although Samantha had just finished a degree in Art History, she was planning to start a full-time course in journalism the following year, because, as she said, 'I was quite keen to get another qualification after leaving university because obviously a degree isn't really enough'. In between time, she was studying typing and shorthand in preparation for the journalism course, as well as working voluntarily on her local newspaper, all so that she would eventually be in a better position to get a permanent job.

In relation to the position of women within this changing educational and professional market, Barbara Ehrenreich notes that exclusionary practices in the established professions, originally set up to 'exclude intruders from below' (1990:220), now present obstacles to everyone, including men and women from the middle-classes.

> We'd be very happy if she'd finish the course, because you can always get work as a doctor, but it does mean going on doing more and more courses. You never really finish...
> Charlotte's mother, white middle-class

This kind of extended and ongoing commitment to education had major implications in terms of the nature and shape of the working-class and middle-class young women's transitions onto the labour market. Very few of the working-class black and white families were in any position to meet the kinds of financial demands that such educational consumption required.

Women at the 'top'

The 'feminisation' of work thesis presents problems but it also signals some important effects of the process by which women have entered the post-war labour market, most especially since the 1960s and the onset of second wave feminism. From the early 1970s onwards, more and more girls began to stay on at school and go on to further education to train for expanding white-collar office work. By the mid 1980s just under half of all further and higher education students were female, and in the 1990s they became the majority (Arnot et al 1999).

Women may have increased their share of managerial and professional jobs (Callender 1996) but relatively few have made it to the 'top jobs'. While one in four junior managers in the UK are women, they represent only 1-2 per cent (Summers 1991; Adkins 1995, 1997) at senior management level. Women make up only 12 per cent of partners in law firms, 15 per cent of medical consultants (Hall 1996) and 9 per cent of university professors or principal lecturers (Morley 1999). So, while women have had to work at least as hard as men to gain entry into previously male-dominated jobs, this does not necessarily herald a decline in occupational segregation (Rubery and Fagan 1994). In the late 1980s and 1990s, mainstream media had a fondness for portraying the female worker of that time as a 'self-assured, attractive, middle level manager, with two happy children (in school or day-care), a smooth-functioning household (thanks to all the new labour-saving household technology), and blessed with a supportive husband' (Bakker 1988: 73). The middle-class young women in *Project 4:21*, most of whom were, or were on route to becoming highly qualified, were being trained to or had entered professions where they could realistically expect to reach those 'middle management' levels. In this way they were far better suited to the Cosmo image of the 1990s woman. But for the majority of the young women, it was unlikely that most of the middle-class girls' professional careers would match the outstanding success of their educational careers (see Chapter Six). While organisations reproduce gendered power relations and prevailing notions of femininity, middle-class women still face vertical segregation in the professions (Hall 1996).

Work and motherhood

As with social class, there is a desire to come up with one model that can explain and predict women's changing relationship to employment. But an adequate analysis must be multivariant in its composition to reflect the complexity of interrelationships and discourses within which women are located. We cannot hope to understand women's participation in the world of work in isolation from their social class background, 'race', ethnicity and education, without considering their kinship and family structures, and importantly their

relationship to childbearing and childrearing. Women's life courses are very different to those of men and the timing of decisions with regard to gaining qualifications, setting up an independent home, having children, taking care-breaks, all have an immense and far-reaching impact on women's lives and the choices open to them in the future (Walby 1997).

Within a popular 'women can have everything' discourse, what also gets lost are the emotional costs of combining caring for a family with a professional career. The majority of women leave their full-time jobs when they have children, but most return to part-time work. While the amount of time women take out to have their children has changed in recent years (Hudson et al 2004), childbirth is still associated with downward occupational mobility, especially when the mother returns to the same job but on a part-time basis. This was the case for many of the mothers of the middle-class girls in the study who had left full-time professional work and returned to a lower grade, often in a part-time capacity. Twenty years later it was likely that their daughters would face similar setbacks in their professional career trajectories. However, their high levels of educational credentials will make a significant difference to their return to the labour market.

In general, women with qualifications above A level are more likely to be in full-time work - 86 per cent compared with 50 per cent of unqualified women. But as labour market analysis shows, the effect of qualifications is most marked among women with pre-school age children, where only 27 per cent of unqualified women were economically active compared with 76 per cent of highly qualified women (Office for National Statistics 1999).

Callender (1996) argues that an important factor in the overall expansion in the number of women working is the participation in paid employment by women with young children, the majority of whom would previously have been full-time mothers and housewives. Marital status used to be the most important indicator of women's economic activity, but this is no longer the case. Responsibility for children under sixteen years of age is now the most significant determinant of whether or not and how much a woman works outside the home, especially the

age of the youngest child, with the lowest rate for those with pre-school children and the highest for those with school age children. At the same time, the rate of all categories of women in the work force are increasing, including mothers of young children. Lone mothers are the main exception to this, with significantly lower rates of employment compared to married or partnered mothers (Office for National Statistics 1999).

It was during discussions of the future possibility of motherhood that an ambivalence towards the idea of investing wholeheartedly in a career emerged amongst some middle-class young women in the study:

> Em... (pause) well, I have got... there'd be quite a lot of time for me to have a job first. And I don't think I'd mind giving up my job to have children. I mean, you know, just for my own sake I'd want to do something, sort of a part-time job, but I wouldn't, I'm not really career orientated where I'd have to go back to my career at all.
> Samantha, 21 year old, white middle-class

At least part of this uncertainty was closely connected to the young women's experience of their mothers being overworked because of the dual responsibilities of careers and households. Quite simply, many of these young women did not want to have to work as hard as they had witnessed their mothers doing:

> I just remember, um, there was always a lot to do and it was always when mum was like, um, just fed up and didn't, have much self esteem, very low self esteem.
> Liz, 21 year old, white middle-class

> And she has, my Dad works really hard, he's quite a workaholic. Because he's such a perfectionist, everything has to be right, so he spends hours in the office and so my mother basically has to run the household and keep a job going and look after the children, all by herself. So that's quite stressful.
> Helen, 21 year old, white middle-class

> Basically I think, it should be easier to have a baby and a career, and it basically is a bit hard to give up your career and have a baby and go back to it. Although it's possible, lots of people do it, but in the end it shouldn't be quite so hard, it should be more equal role taking for men and women.
> Amanda, 21 year old, white middle-class

Professional occupations in the public sector, where many women work, have also seen an erosion of working conditions in recent years. Despite their salaries keeping in line with living costs, they are generally expected to work longer hours and take more responsibility (Gee et al 1996). The contradictions this presents for middle-class women who want to have a family were summed up by Charlotte's mother (Charlotte was at medical school).

> ... all the women doctors I know feel guilty either because they're working and neglecting their families, or because they're not working and people say "Well you've had all that money spent on your education and you're not using it." So they live with guilt, one way or another.(...) I see people struggling and they don't do it. They get nannies and other people to do it for them.
> Charlotte's mother, white middle-class

As Charlotte's mother made clear, the choice is difficult and guilt-provoking. But it is also clear that some women, essentially the professional middle-class, can resolve those difficulties by employing other women, usually from the working-class, to do their child-care for them - people like Ruth, an African-Caribbean working-class sixteen year old who did extremely well at school and trained as a nursery nurse. But these working-class women are rarely in a position to pay for the sort of child care they would like for their own children. However, as Charlotte's mother made clear, the choice for middle-class women in the new economy was as hard and irresolvable.

In Chapter Six, I explored the enormous investment in middle-class girls' education and argued that this investment was a defence against the fear of downward mobility contained in fears and fantasies of educational failure. Given the persisting contradictions consistently produced by their 'femininity' in relation to work, how could these young women have squared the investment in their route to a professional status and their desires for children? It was middle-class mothers who most clearly articulated the difficulties these contradictions produced.

> You simply can't do all those things at the same time. Admittedly one or two women do, but the majority of women can't. So you've got to think in terms of having something that you can do, but different levels of intensity throughout your life really. I mean, I think the old idea of women just sort of stopping everything when they're married, and spending the rest of their lives bringing up two children wasn't right either certainly. I

think it's very good if women can get into something. But the idea that you can just carry on through your child rearing years almost as if they're not there, is obviously wrong (laughs). Which you would need to do if you were going to get to the top in your particular profession.
Samantha's mother, white middle-class

So I think that there's a right pattern that they should be supported during those years, but perhaps one doesn't get married, so you still need to support yourself then. Besides the heavy break up of marriage, there's also fathers do die, so it's important that if she needs to be able to support her family, then she can do so. And then there's the question of having something interesting and fulfilling to do academically.
Charlotte's mother, white middle-class

The mothers' employment had involved many more shifts than was the case with the fathers over time. This was related to changes in the occupational structure but also to social class. Like the middle-class fathers, the middle-class mothers' occupational mobility tended to be through promotion in professions in which they had qualified before having children, returning to those careers full-time as the children grew older. The majority of the middle-class mothers had careers in caring and feminised professions such as teaching (which 'fitted' in with child-rearing) and all of these women had achieved promotion within these careers.

The expansion of the welfare state provided a big boost to women's employment, partly because of social policy on care for the elderly, children and the sick, which to some extent freed women to work outside the home. Paradoxically, because the expanded public sector provided much of this work, many women who were partially freed from caring in their homes took up 'caring' jobs. From 1960 onwards, jobs in the service and public sectors outstripped the manufacturing sector in number and economic importance (Gershuny and Miles 1983).

Interestingly, within *Project 4:21*, the main changes in mobility were to be seen in working-class mother's occupations, with ten (56 per cent) of them achieving occupational mobility in a different sphere to the one they had been employed in when their daughters were six and ten years old, compared with four (27 per cent) of the middle-class women. Working-class mother's employment was

overwhelmingly at the lower end of clerical occupations and as assistants to care professionals. However, these moves, such as from a cleaner in a pub to physiotherapist's assistant did represent a real improvement in working conditions for the women. Some of the working-class mothers had returned to college and upgraded their skills and qualifications as a strategy to get higher paid work and work with better, more secure conditions of employment. Dawn's mother was advised to do an NNEB course by the head teacher of the primary school where she worked as a classroom assistant, who told her, 'You ought to go and get yourself qualified because later on in life when you want to earn some more money, you won't be able to because primary helpers won't get the choice'.

Fathers' career trajectories[7]

For the majority of middle-class fathers, the expected trajectory of a career in 'the professions' had been fully realised, with promotion and/or independent business ventures being achieved in their mid to late thirties. Eleven (73 per cent) of the middle-class fathers, all of whom had begun their professional careers in their early twenties, had achieved a significant degree of occupational mobility or promotion over the last twenty years. One had set up a highly successful businesses in printing and publishing, others had been promoted to the senior ranks of the diplomatic and medical professions and another had become a partner in a solicitor's firm. Two of the middle-class fathers career paths were less clear; one had recently received a considerable inheritance and given up journalism to pursue his ambition to be an artist, the other (who came from a working-class family) had left the Greater London Council when it was dismantled in the early 1980s to set up his own small business which had continued to provide a moderate income.

For the working-class fathers however, the picture was less uniform. Nine (53 per cent) of the working-class fathers had achieved some promotion in the same job, but only one, Mr Green, could be described as having been

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[7] See note 5.

successful in business. While none of the middle-class fathers had remained static at work (i.e. in the same position or job) three (18 per cent) of the working-class fathers had done so. Three (18 per cent) of the working-class fathers had become downwardly mobile, two (12 per cent) were unemployed and one had been medically retired in his late forties. Six (35 per cent) of the working-class fathers had experienced unemployment and/or redundancy while none of the middle-class fathers had done so.

Dreams of a working future

For the middle-class young women, their educational careers so far had been focused on their future working careers as professionals. They had a much more fixed idea of what a professional identity might look like and expected higher rewards in the world of work. It was unlikely that the majority of the working-class girls would have the same kind of financial reward, conditions and autonomy in their work, but this did not mean that most could not hope for a secure and interesting job. Jacky, who had been on a series of short-term, temporary clerical contracts and who was unemployed at the time of the second interview remained optimistic about her working future.

> My ideal job is something that I enjoy, definitely, with a good salary. I mean money isn't everything but it's just nice to have a - get on with life and that sort of thing. Some sort of job where I can get up the ladder...
> Jacky, 21 year old, white working-class

Patsy was employed as a disability bus escort for her local council, but in the past, rather than sign on, she had worked as a cleaner for 25 hours a week, bringing home £55. Being a horse owner and horse lover however, her dream was one day to work with horses, perhaps even own her own stables. Patsy's fantasy for the future did not prevent her from being pragmatic about the present:

> Well I want to pass my driving test and then be one of the drivers for the council, and then in about a year's time I hope to pass my PSV which is to drive the big blue buses about. Big 45 seaters and whatever. At the moment that's my aim. And when I've done that I don't know what I going to do, but I've given myself a year to do that.
> Patsy, 21 year old, white working-class

Working-class Anna was an aspirational young mother, who had had her daughter when she was sixteen and had left school to look after her daughter, although not before doing well in her GCSEs. She was determined to improve her family's material prospects and felt that she could work her way up to a job with intrinsic rewards in the catering trade:

> I manage a restaurant (....)So it's a really good job and there's lots of rewards. Hopefully in about four or five years time I'll have my own Beefeater, so it's very good, very good rewards. It's lot of hard work. Its long hours, like I go out the house at 9 o'clock in the morning and come home for a couple of hours in the afternoon and then don't come home till half past one in the morning. So it's a long day, but I love it, absolutely love it.
> Anna, 21 year old, white working-class

In fact, by the time of the second interview, Anna had had a change of heart about one day managing her own pub or restaurant. The demands of being assistant manager in a large pub/restaurant had proved too exhausting for her and she was unhappy about having to spend so much time away from her child and partner. Her comments reveal the down side of this kind of service work which has so expanded in recent decades and occupies so many working-class women.

> ...and like the hours were ridiculous. Like sometimes I could do 16, 17 hours a day. (....) I thought to myself well, it's a choice between either the Beefeater or John and Rosie really.
> Anna

More usually however, and in contrast to the middle-class girls who had constructed fairly rigid occupational routes through academic subject choice and exam success, the working-class girls who had not gone on to further or higher education tended to be more vague about the specific shape of their future:

> I don't know what sort of job I'd have because at the moment jobs are so scarce, it could range from anything, apart from I wouldn't clean, because I do that at home and I'm fed up with it, (laughs) it wouldn't be - it could be a nine to five job, but it wouldn't be your normal nine to five pen pushing job. It wouldn't be that. Because I like to be out and about a bit more. It could be, because I do like my freedom.
> Jenny, 21 year old, white working-class

> And I don't really want to continue working in this field as a career. I want to do something either to with - I want to do some voluntary work with

animals. I want to do something that I really want to do, not something - at the moment I have to do what I'm doing. Although I do get benefits. But when I've actually done all my travelling and seen all I want to see, then I can leave the job I'm doing and do something I want to do.
Kerry, 21 year old, white working-class

I hope to (own my own house). If I'm working I definitely will go for that. Because I mean it's cheaper than bloody renting anyway. It just seems daft. (....) I mean if I got a good enough job or good enough career and could move, in that way, then I would.
Teresa, 21 year old, white working-class

The middle-class girls were much clearer about their projected careers, the options open to them and the possible routes they could realistically take. This was especially so for those following professional vocational degrees in medicine and related fields such as pharmacy where very clear training, registration and occupational 'ladders' are set out with options to specialise.

> Um I don't know. At the moment I- as well as you get more senior in pharmacy you can pick and choose where you go to, and the kind of thing you do, so - because I've got like a rotational programme at the moment I've got a chance to see a bit more like what's on offer and then I can make a decision in a couple of years time about which way I want to go from there.
> Deborah, 21 year old, white middle-class

For those middle-class girls who had done arts degrees, the possibilities for work were far less defined and the girls tended to view their futures as far more open. Even so, they expressed clear expectations of finding work that was directly relevant to their training and appropriate to their level of education and stressed that they wanted 'fulfilling' and 'interesting' careers. It is important to remember that all but two of the middle-class girls had not had to think about their working future in such a concrete way before. This transition to the world of work had been made by most of the working-class girls who had left school by the age of eighteen, although for many of them it was partial and fragmented in the sense that it involved periods of part-time work, unemployment, a return to education and/or frequent job changes. For all but a tiny minority of the middle-class young women, their sights until that point had been set firmly on educational goals, but these had recently been or were about to be achieved.

> I mean I'd be quite happy doing anything that I sort of felt comfortable with and felt that I was you know reasonably good at I suppose (....) But

unfortunately I'm not even quite sure what that is at the moment. cos I mean up until now there's not, although I had year out after school I had something secure to do a year later, and so up until now you've always known basically what you were doing and had a sort of path to follow whereas now there's sort of sometimes this feeling there's this kind of endless stretch that you can sort of fill however you want(....) Sometimes it can seem quite an exciting thing and sometimes it's quite a daunting thing you know.
Amanda, 21 year old, white middle-class

Just I guess it's having a more a sort of wider outlook on things. In the sort of sense of a more um - you know just being aware there's a complete, there's a whole world, not just not just sort of getting out of Oxford, there's you know so many possibilities - or I feel there are.
Naomi, 21 year old, white middle-class

Conclusion

Everything is presented as a possibility today for women. But this also means that individuals are increasingly held accountable for their own fate (Giddens 1991). The necessity for self-invention is imposed in extremely contradictory economic, social and individual landscapes, where everything is open to change but at the same time older patterns of gender and class practices remain firmly entrenched.

The most obvious problems for women are to do with combining career with motherhood. This not only applies to the more glamorous stereotype of the 'superwoman'; the powerful professional career woman. Most families in Britain are financially dependent on women's employment and most women's employment is part-time (Office for National Statistics 1999). But there is something else important here. The feminist discourses and economic necessity through which women as 'workers' have been constituted clash badly with other, older discourses that have powerfully formed feminine subjectivities. The expectation of and desire for independence can conflict with a deep rooted desire to take the time out to have children, stay at home to look after them, and in turn be 'looked after' themselves. However, in a climate in which risk and uncertainty have impacted upon intimate relationships, assertions of independence may also hold some defensive aspects. Needing no one other

than one's self may be a way of defending against the terrors of dependence, namely abandonment.

I do not intend to present a wholeheartedly bleak picture of the working-class families in the study, and their relationships to work and education. There is no profit to be made in imagining that nothing had improved for them in the last twenty years - indeed most viewed aspects of their material lives as having improved significantly. What I do want to explore however, are the many contradictions that arose when attempting to map those changes over the lives of both middle-class and working-class people. Some things had not changed significantly for either class; inequality reigned with privilege and oppressions persisted for the middle-class and working-class girls respectively. But there is more to the story of class than this; privilege is not all a bed of roses for the middle-class girls, nor oppression a mire of hopeless despair for the working-class girls. What impressed and intrigued me most were the ways in which the girls and young women of *Project 4:21* struggled to creatively live their lives – in the face of oppression, privilege, hope, despair and all.

In the following Part III of the thesis, I bring the themes and arguments put forward in this thesis together in a concluding chapter.

PART III

CONCLUSION

This thesis has been about two groups of girls who took part in the qualitative longitudinal study *Project 4:21* growing up and becoming young women through the closing decades of the twentieth century; turbulent years that witnessed the change, transformation and even disappearance of some established features of the social, economic and personal terrains of British society. At its broadest, the thesis has addressed the question of whether, in this altered landscape, the concept of social class is still a useful one in helping us explore and understand how contemporary feminine subjectivities are formed. More specifically, it has asked if class theorisations have the power to throw light on the crucial question of why some groups of girls persistently do well educationally, whilst other groups just as persistently (and predictably) do very badly in comparison? As this thesis has demonstrated, the answer to both of these questions is a clear and unqualified, though complex 'yes'. This thesis has revealed, unravelled and sought to explain some of those complexities.

I have argued that, since the erosion of many of the sites through which social class has traditionally been conceptualised in mainstream sociology, in particular labour market shifts such as the dimunition of the UK manufacturing industries and some of their associated communities, we must look beyond structure to extend our understanding of how social class operates in, on and through contemporary subjects. Most importantly, understandings of social class identity processes need to be shifted so that they can take account of the psychic as well as social dimensions on which classed, gendered and racialised subjectivities are constructed and lived. To that end, this thesis has developed a psychosocial perspective by bringing together a number of theoretical strands; Foucauldian and feminist post-structuralism and the psychoanalysis of Klein and the object relations school. This perspective has informed the research design of *Project 4:21*, shaped the analysis of data from that study and guided me to the arguments made here.

Throughout the thesis I have maintained that the years in which the young women of *Project 4:21* were growing up, constituted an historical period of loss

and uncertainty as well as hope and excitement. The notion of self-invention and self-regulation offered a way to understand the social and psychological demands placed on the young women and their families by the dramatic changes that were taking place in the social and economic world. For this was also a *transitional* period, both in the lives of the girls and in terms of the shift towards a post-industrial economy. Transitions and change (even those most desired) inevitably entail some uncertainty; it is unusual for new 'structures' to be finished and put in place before the old ones are pulled down (if they ever are completely). This is as true for psychic structures as it is for material ones. It was the fragility of these emerging social and economic arrangements that demanded certain psychological strategies of the young women and their families to defend against the anxiety that this uncertainty aroused. I have attempted to show how the young women of *Project 4:21* lived that uncertainty in the ways in which they coped psychically and socially with the contradictory demands placed upon them.

Summary of chapters

I began in Part I, Chapter One by mapping the theoretical ground on which the thesis rests. Part of the challenge of this thesis has been to articulate the rational and non-rational when thinking about the relationship between personal lives, education, social and economic forces that shape historical periods, and processes of stratification such as gender, social class and 'race'. To help me do this I have taken key concepts from the post-structuralism of Foucault and the psychoanalysis of Klein as well as object relations theorists such as Winnicott and Bion. In particular, I have utilised these important thinkers' theorisations as they relate to ideas about the human subject and the constitution of 'the self', power, the production of knowledge, the regulation of citizens, the unconscious, individual and group defences against anxiety, and the nature of reality. These ideas have formed the conceptual foundations of this thesis, and have shaped my methodological, epistemological and analytic approach. This psychosocial perspective has cast a powerful analytic light upon the dynamic relationship between internal and external worlds and the experience of schooling in the constitution of gendered and classed identities.

Chapter Two of Part I focused on methodology and detailed the development of a psychosocial approach to the analysis and interpretation of qualitative interview data through 'three levels of analysis'. Using these three levels to analyse examples of data from *Project 4:21*, the chapter demonstrated how important it is to take account of emotions in research; in particular, the epistemological importance of researcher-subjectivity in the research process, and the significance of unconscious dimensions of research encounters. I illustrated this by exploring how the recognition of my own difficult feelings of envy towards the middle-class mothers of Phase One of the research allowed an important insight into their regulation as mothers that may otherwise have been missed.

In subsequent phases of the research, through reflection on my own defences against being envied by members of my family who had not done as 'well' as me at school and had not entered professional careers, I began to appreciate how for the middle-class girls and young women, living with privilege has its own costs as well as rewards: defending themselves against the envy of others is one of the psychic processes through which their classed and gendered subjectivity is formed.

Through examples from the interviews and observation material I explored a number of themes that ran across the data set. The case of two middle-class sisters, Angela and Heather, who were respectively positioned as 'clever' and 'slow', was examined. I argued that these designations of 'ability' were constituted through unconscious family dynamics formed through fears of failure, but that this understanding of Heather as an educational 'failure', although on some levels a fiction, was nevertheless one that had real effects. The example from my interview with Mr and Mrs Green highlighted an aspect of working-class family dynamics that was echoed through the narratives of many of the working-class young women: the importance of 'keeping close' and difficulty of difference from family, peers and community. These examples highlighted the need for explanations that can cope with a complex psychosocial dynamic.

Part II of the thesis concentrated on my analysis of the data from all four Phases of *Project 4:21*. Each chapter focused on a particular aspect of the data, but all chapters were concerned to examine the micro-dynamics of gender, class and education as they were lived by the girls and families who took part in the research. Below I briefly review the key findings from each of those chapters.

Referring to Phase One of the research with girls from Group A, Chapter Three looked at the significance of class in the socialisation of the girls and the differential regulation of their mothers through discourses of 'normal' and 'pathological' mothering. Through a close examination of child-rearing practices, I argued that rationality and reason were integral to middle-class subjectivity and demonstrated how the middle-class mothers socialised their daughters to become rational citizens. The idea that rationality, as well as the suppression of difficult emotions, was the cornerstone on which the middle-class girls' educational success rested, was a theme that ran through the thesis. So too was the idea that classed subjectivities are produced relationally; that is, that the middle-classes are constructed as 'normal' in dynamic relation to the construction of the working-classes as 'pathological'.

Chapter Four pointed to the stark evidence of significant and worrying inequalities in the educational performance of the working-class and middle-class girls, even at ten years old. By the time they were twenty-one years old the differences between the two groups were huge. The majority (93%) of the middle-class girls had done very well at school and had achieved outstanding GCSE and A level results; all but one of them had gone to university. In contrast, most of the working-class girls did not reach the government standard of examination success (five GCSEs at grade A-C). Only 27% of them had applied to study, or had completed courses of study at higher education level. In this chapter, I began my argument that there are emotional costs of success and failure for the working-class and middle-class girls. I illustrated this by looking at the way in which happiness and distress were viewed and responded to during the educational careers of two twenty-one year olds, working-class Kerry and middle-class Naomi. In Kerry's case distress was read as lack of

ability, while in Naomi's case it was not attended to because it would get in the way of her outstandingly successful path to Oxbridge. The place of happiness in the education of the working-class girls was also explored and here I argued that the experience of school failure of many of the working-class parents had resulted in many of them feeling deeply ambivalent about their daughter's education. As I argued in Chapter Three, middle-class parents pushed their children to intellectualise problems from an early age, prioritised a rational response to difficult emotions and blurred the boundaries between work and play. These practices stood the middle-class girls and parents in good stead when it came to facing the kind of anxiety that learning must inevitably provoke at some time or other (i.e. the anxiety of not knowing, finding a new subject difficult), as well as being able to endure the physical commitment that school work requires (i.e doing homework). I argued that in contrast, for many working-class parents, the demands that secondary education in particular placed on their daughters, aroused unconscious anxieties in themselves which they defended against by stressing 'happiness' above educational performance. For the middle-class families however, happiness could not be uncoupled from educational success; the two were not mutually exclusive.

Against considerable odds, a small number of the working-class girls were successful and this phenomenon was explored in Chapter Five. The usefulness of the notion of 'hybridity' as put forward by some cultural theorists in relation to new forms of ethnic subjectivities was examined through the case-studies of two working-class twenty-one year old young women who had gone to university, Nicky and Holly, who were constructing and negotiating hybrid identities in the liminal spaces of 'race' and class. Their narratives illustrated the difficult emotional trajectory involved in working-class white and mixed-race young women following the route to upward social mobility through higher education. This chapter also demonstrated that those few working-class girls who do succeed at school, do so in quite different ways from the middle-class girls. Picking up themes from Chapter Three, I argued that the family practices implicated in these working-class girls' educational success are not to be understood as pathological or abnormal versions of middle-class ones, but are produced in an attempt to adapt to much more difficult conditions. I maintained

that it is not useful to compare working-class and middle-class practices for the production of educational success, because the families operate in very different circumstances and with quite different dynamics. It is not by being like the middle-class girls that working-class girls succeed, but rather by a complex mixture of determination to live a different kind of life from that of their parents and peers, and an emotional support from parents that is not disrupted by the parents' distress at the difficulties their daughter has to face, bringing up, as it does, memories of their own failure.

In Chapter Six I turned my attention to the middle-class young women of *Project 4:21* and looked at the making of them as the embodiment of the bourgeois rational subject. I argued that, through the practices of the middle-class mothers when the girls were very young, their daughters have been produced as ideal liberal democratic citizens. Part of this process involved taking excellent school and examination performance as the norm. However, what was so impressively achieved by these young women was not accorded the elaborate praise received by working-class young women for much more modest achievements. This produced an endemic anxiety amongst the middle-class young women, which served an important function in the regulation of the feminine as rational. These young women, who found it very hard to feel good about their educational performance, had to constantly be on their guard against failure and regarded the solution to their anxieties as working harder and harder. I have argued that although girls can, in principle, now take up educational and professional positions previously accorded to their brothers only, their production as a bourgeois subject is a huge struggle and is never simply nor entirely achieved and certainly not without terrible penalties for both body and mind. Their narratives have thus thoroughly displaced fictions of autonomous self-hood (Rose 1991). Above all, this chapter demonstrated that the story of rationality as natural and normal, and the outstanding success of some girls, is produced by a great deal of work, some of it social and cultural, some of it psychic, defensive.

In the 1980s and 1990s it was popular in some sociological quarters to proclaim social class as irrelevant (or even dead). Chapter Seven addressed the

question of how and in what ways subjects who previously understood themselves as working-class now experience their class location if the traditional sites through which classed subjects have been articulated have declined? In this chapter I addressed the problem of identifying and locating a 'real' working class, and argued for the need to move beyond understandings of class that rely on structure, materiality and consciousness, to consider the place of emotions, phantasy and the unconscious. The case-studies of the Green and Cole families, who had both moved out of London in the 1980s during the period of council house sales and house price boom, illustrated how classed and racialised subjectivities were constructed and regulated within and through the interrelated fields of housing, geographical location and the cultural codes of taste and style. I demonstrated that social class, while its existence is denied in some quarters, is explicitly and implicitly present in the lives of the families that took part in this research and is one of the ways in which the self as self is brought into being; that this is a process rather than a fixed position; that working-class and middle-class identities are produced in terms of their position as 'other' to each other; and, that the boundaries of class are not and have never been stable, but are produced through conflict that takes place at the level of the symbolic as well as the material.

Chapter Eight showed the complexity of women's position in the labour market in the 1990s, with a divide between highly paid professional work and low-paid service work with built-in periods of unemployment. For the young women of *Project 4:21*, their employment patterns mirrored this trend. Everything may have been presented as a possibility for women at that time, but this chapter demonstrated how the opportunities open to the low-credentialled working-class young women were limited to the most vulnerable, insecure and poorly paid sectors of the labour market. Some of the working-class young women's narratives painfully illustrated the physical and psychological toll that such work took on them. Many of the middle-class young women were heading for professional careers, but despite their outstanding examination results, this too depended on constantly updating skills or learning new ones. The idea that they were competing on the same territory as their male peers was challenged by the argument that the public-professional sector is now understood as a lower-

status occupational choice for the middle-classes because high-flying middle-class men are now moving into the international finance sector with its huge salaries and million pound bonuses. Furthermore, all of the young women, whatever their class, faced the probability that, should they become mothers, they would have to combine work and family responsibilities for the whole of their working lives, just as their mothers had done.

Throughout the thesis I have highlighted the intransigence of social class: the ways in which class insisted on its presence even in the midst of its transformation. 'Classification operates in and through subjects: it is marked on bodies and minds, it ruptures the smooth surface of the discourses of classlessness, it can be 'spotted a mile off' in the way that it inscribes subjects' (Walkerdine et al 2001: 212). As this thesis demonstrates, that classification and subjectification not only works on complex conscious and rational processes but also on desires, wishes and anxieties, and creates defensive organisations through which the research participants lived their inscription into the discursive practices that made up the sociality of turn of the century Britain. Unlike accounts of class processes of modernity, I have maintained that regulative discourses and practices and unconscious processes are central to understanding how class functions and is lived in the postmodern era. The necessity for self-invention is imposed in extremely contradictory economic, social and individual landscapes, where everything is open to change but at the same time older patterns of gender and class practices remain firmly entrenched.

The thesis has contributed to an understanding of the construction of bourgeois feminine subjectivities by pointing to the amount of anxiety that the middle-class young women experience over educational performance that, on the surface, looks so seamless. It has also added to an understanding of why many of the working-class girls and young women found it so difficult to achieve and sustain good performance at school and did not want to continue their education past compulsory school-leaving age. It has pointed to some of the underlying emotional dynamics that can arise in working-class young women and their families which can constitute unconscious obstacles to doing well.

The wealth and depth of the data of *Project 4:21* over this time has meant that I have been able to take an historical perspective, to map shifts in the structures of society onto shifts in the families who took part in the research. This has allowed me to explore how the young women and their families have made sense of changes, both externally, in industry, at work, on the street, and internally, in the family and in the self; in the ongoing construction and re-construction of classed and gendered subjectivities over time.

Methodologically, the psychosocial approach to the collection and analysis of data put forward in the thesis represents an important extension to debates in feminist qualitative methodologies. The early published work from Phase One and Two of *Project 4:21* (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989) came into the public domain when feminist researchers and writers in Britain, Europe and the United States were beginning to challenge some of the orthodoxies of positivist social science and to argue for an account of social science methodology that exposed the less objective dimensions of research encounters. The book *Democracy in the Kitchen* (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989) drew on post-structuralist conceptualisations of power in order to theorise how power differentials between researcher and researched, typically differentials of social class, gender and 'race', had profound implications for the production of knowledge through research. As such, this analysis was part of a body of work that created new territory on which to critically engage with conventional academic, popular and political discourses on the production of classed feminine identities through the regulation of mothering practices and the socialisation of girls. This analysis contained ideas that were, at that time, ground-breaking; ideas and arguments that laid down new conceptual terrain for other writers to build upon (for example Lawler 2000; Skeggs 1997; Reay 1998). This thesis has built upon the ideas contained in that early analysis to develop a psychosocial methodological framework within which to work with conscious and unconscious emotions in the research process in a way that is fully theoretically informed, systematic, rigorous and does not confuse researcher reflexivity with researcher confessionality.

In proposing a psychosocial perspective, this thesis has brought together strands of sociological and psychoanalytic theory in order to highlight connections between spheres of experience that are more usually considered as separate and unconnected in the social sciences. In doing this I have joined a growing number of writers and researchers in other fields of social enquiry who are challenging traditional divisions between psychology, sociology and cultural theory (see Chapter One). However, there are very few who have taken this approach and applied it to the social and psychological constructions of social class, gender and educational identities. Through this psychosocial analytic lens this thesis has challenged rationalist assumptions about the human subject and the workings of social class. It has questioned simple and highly normalised notions of academic success and excellence, ambition and upward mobility and instead highlighted how subjects survive the threats that contemporary life poses with new uncertainties and old certainties.

In the introduction to this thesis I said that I wanted to move beyond economism and culturalism in order to create a 'third space' (Cohen and Ainley 2000) in which to consider the dynamics of social class and gender. The psychosocial perspective developed here has contributed to that in a number of ways. It has allowed me to keep together aspects of experience that are normally treated as entirely separate, namely the psychic and the social, and enabled their synthesis at both a theoretical and analytic level. We might see the more commonplace separation between sociological and psychological theory as a complex form of 'splitting' in a Kleinian sense (see Chapter Two), whereby that which cannot be tolerated is understood as belonging elsewhere. Bringing social and psychoanalytic theory together may then be a way of achieving the kind of integration that Kleinians and the object relations school would suggest is indicative of health. This kind of integration, whether on a theoretical or personal level, is not achieved without friction or even conflict, and is never achieved 'once and for all', as the young women's narratives make clear. Undoing those splits, mending them, considering the split-off material to belong to the self and not just the 'other' certainly stirs up some difficult emotional material. But as this thesis has demonstrated, integrating these aspects in a psychosocial perspective also has the potential to cast a powerfully

deconstructive light on the complexities of oppression. This is the ground on which I would seek to establish that 'third space' for thinking about issues of oppression and social justice.

In conclusion, I would return to a point made in Chapter Six; that psychic splitting is a key process in the maintenance of a society in which it seems rational that different classes, genders, races come to internalise their 'rightful' place (Lucey and Reay 2002b: 154). Splitting is therefore central to social stasis. To focus as equally on psychic practices as social ones, as I have done here, does not mean that we should give up on the idea of collective projects committed to social justice. However, it may entail a different kind of 'giving up'; in particular the giving up of the certainties afforded by ideas contained in reason and rationality, autonomy and agency. Including the possibility of psychic integration as part of a political project would require a willingness and commitment (because this is not always comfortable, as the thesis has made clear) to recognising, taking in even, aspects of the self such as envy, fear and disgust, which we may need to expel in order to sustain political allegiance. This is an issue that needs to be addressed in any political project of social transformation.

APPENDIX 1 **Data set of *Project 4:21***

Group A	***Working-class***	***Middle-class***	***Data type***	***Data set***
Phase One –	15	15	Home recordings	70 hours (approx)
4 year olds			Nursery school recordings	60 hours (approx)
Phase Two –	15	13	Whole-class maths test	Test results for 23 year 6 classes
10 year olds			Interviews with each girl	28 interviews. 30-40 mins each
			Interviews with maths teachers	27 interviews. 30 –60 mins each
Phase 4 –	12	12	2 interviews with each girl	24 interviews. 1.5 – 3 hrs each
21 year olds			1 interview with each parent (if possible)	37 interviews. 1.5 – 2 hrs each

Group B	***Working-class***	***Middle-class***	***Data type***	***Data set***
Phase Three –	6	2	Home recordings	32 hours (approx)
6 year olds			Primary school recordings	32 hours (approx)
			1 interview with each girl	8 interviews. 30-40 mins each
			1 interview with parents (together if possible)	8 interviews. 1-1.5 hrs each
			1 interview with each class teacher	4 interviews. 30 – 60 mins
Phase Four –	6	2	2 interviews with each girl	16 interviews. 1.5 – 3 hrs each
16 year olds			1 interview with each parent (if possible)	16 interviews. 1.5 – 3 hrs each
			Interviews with each form teacher	11 interviews. 1.5 – 2 hrs each

APPENDIX 2 Ethnicity and social class of sample at Phase Four

Ethnicity	*Working-class*	*Middle-class*	*Total*
White	13	12	25
African-Caribbean	2		2
Mixed-race	3		3
Asian		2	2
Total	18	14	32

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